

Parenting Through a Crisis

After a traumatic event, children need to know that they are loved and cared for, that there is still some predictability to their world, and that there continues to be hope for a positive future. Here are some things that parents/guardians can do to support their children/youth through a difficult time:

- Establish a sense of order and normalcy by maintaining:
 - Daily routines such as meal and bedtimes as well as general behaviour expectations.
- Provide comfort through:
 - Hugs, food, and family traditions.
- Monitor television:
 - Very young children should not watch media coverage of this event as repeated viewing can be traumatic.
 - Older children should watch only limited coverage for the same reason.
- Talk about feelings:
 - Allow time for children/youth to talk about their feelings
 - Remind him/her that feelings of anger, sadness, guilt, fear, relief are all normal.
 - Be aware that this kind of news and these strong feelings can lead to: nightmares, irritability, stomach aches, loss of appetite, lack of interest in normal activities. These are all common reactions under these circumstances and are usually temporary.
- Engage in family activities together such as:
 - Chores, meals, outings, games, sports, caring for pets, or reading.
- Reinforce family values
 - Talk about the values that are important to your family such as Compassion, Empathy, Caring, etc.
- Model strong coping behaviours:
 - Remember that you are important models in your child's life and he/she will look to see how you are handling this situation. Being calm is very important.
- Help your child build resilience:
 - Resilience is the ability to bounce back after a very difficult situation in a way that makes one stronger and more confident and without losing hope for the promise of the future.
 - Facilitate opportunities for your child to participate in relief efforts directly or indirectly related to the event through fund raising, letter writing, donating used clothing or books, etc.
 - Talk about the positive things that are happening in our world and ways that children are making a difference (through recycling, service clubs, fund-raising, etc.). Read stories or watch videos about children who are making a positive difference in the world.
 - Read stories and have discussion that focus on optimism, courage, self-confidence, humour, triumph over challenges, etc.