

## Helping your child cope with violence

Children may be impacted by violence in a number of ways. It is important to remember that children don't have to directly witness violent events to be stressed. Simply learning about certain traumatic events or seeing media coverage of them is enough to cause some common and predictable reactions listed below. It is important for parents to keep in mind that many reactions will get better naturally with extra support. Parents play a key role in the recovery process. Many children's reactions are based on parents and caretakers reactions. Remember to model healthy coping. Common reactions may include:

- Fear of the event happening again to them or their family
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Changes in eating habits
- Becoming irritable or angry in a way that is not typical for the child
- Mood changes that are not typical, like being much more emotional than usual
- Problems concentrating
- Expressing the trauma in play or art
- Physical complaints like headaches or stomachaches
- Acting younger than before the trauma (regression)

Parents and caretakers play an important role in the support that is necessary for resilience. Children can and do "bounce back" from traumatic events. Below are a few ideas about how to help a child cope with their reactions to trauma:

- Discuss the event honestly, but simply. Avoid graphic descriptions of what happened
- Ask the child what they are thinking and feeling about what happened. Listening is key! Avoid discounting or minimizing feelings
- Let them know that it is ok to feel and react
- Talking, writing, and art are ways children might express their reactions. Encourage this
- Answer questions that your child asks in age appropriate language
- Provide reassurance about fears/ safety. Remind them that they are safe and will be cared for
- Remind your child that this is not an everyday event and that there are people who help make the community safe (Police, Parents, Teachers, etc.)
- When children are distressed, keeping normal routines in place is helpful
- Monitor and limit your child's exposure to media coverage of the event
- If you have concerns about your child's reaction to this event, seek professional support

For additional resources contact Anne Arundel County Crisis Response at 410-768-5522

Copyright © 2018, International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF).  
All Rights Reserved