

Trauma Recovery



- 1 **Create** a safe space
- 2 **Be present** and available
- 3 **Validate** their feelings
- 4 **Be honest** and age appropriate
- 5 **Limit exposure** to traumatic content
- 6 **Address** safety concerns
- 7 **Encourage** empathy and compassion
- 8 **Teach** coping strategies
- 9 **Seek** professional help

When children experience trauma, it profoundly disrupts their sense of safety and normalcy, manifesting in significant emotional and behavioural changes.

Exposure to a traumatic event can cause young people to experience stress, anxiety, and potential trauma, particularly when the event receives ongoing media coverage. Parents observing their children struggle with trauma's aftermath often find the experience distressing. To aid recovery, parents can support their child by creating a nurturing environment, thereby helping them regain a sense of security and encouraging resilience. It is crucial for parents to remain actively involved in their child's healing process, recognising that each child's response to trauma is unique and requires personalised supportive strategies.

The impact of trauma is unpredictable, and therefore recovery timelines vary widely among young people. Depending on the age of the child, younger children may exhibit regressive behaviours, while older children often show signs of withdrawal and agitation. Parents and carers need to monitor what information their children are accessing and manage their exposure to help minimise emotional distress.


1

Create a safe space

This will allow a child to express their emotions, thoughts and specific concerns. Avoid pressuring them to talk about their feelings. Instead, reassure your child that you are there for them when they need.

Be present and available

Sometimes, children simply need someone to be there with them to provide comfort through touch, warmth and physical closeness. Your reassuring presence can be profoundly healing, offering a sense of safety and support.

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Validate their feelings

It's crucial for parents to let children know that whatever they're feeling is normal and natural. Let them express their feelings without judgement. By acknowledging their sadness, anger, confusion, or even a lack of emotion can help them process what they are experiencing.



Be honest and age appropriate

Be guided by their curiosity. Provide truthful information about the incident, using language appropriate for their age and maturity level. Emphasise that such incidents are rare and avoid unnecessary graphic details or exposure to disturbing news coverage.

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Limit exposure to traumatic content

Monitor and limit their exposure to news coverage, especially for younger children. Children under 5 have a right to know the world is a safe place, they don't have the emotional or cognitive capacity to understand the details. Offer alternative activities and distractions if they seem preoccupied by the event.





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Address safety concerns

Provide reassurance that they are safe and supported. Highlight the rapid response from authorities wanting to help such as law enforcement or emergency personnel. By acknowledging young people's fears and uncertainties we can help them regain confidence in their safety.

Encourage empathy and compassion

Foster empathy by discussing the impact the traumatic event has had on victims, their families, and the community. Encourage acts of kindness, support, and understanding towards those affected. Look to the helpers.

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Teach coping strategies

Encourage your child to practice mindfulness and deep breathing exercises to reduce levels of stress and anxiety. Journaling can also help to minimise worrying thoughts. Writing things down can make their brain feel like they've actually acted on their worries and decreased their natural impulse to keep thinking about them.

Seek professional help

Be vigilant for signs of distress, such as changes in behaviour or persistent anxiety. Although most children recover well after traumatic events, some may require additional support. If a child's daily life is significantly disrupted, seek professional help from a counsellor or therapist specialising in trauma support.

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