Children need to hear from parents and caregivers that it is normal to feel a range of emotions during and after a traumatic experience. Knowing this will help children cope with the experience.

**Common Reactions to Trauma**

Children often display signs of stress following a traumatic experience. Common signs of stress may include:

- Sadness, outbursts, tantrums and aggressive behavior
- Return to outgrown behavior
- Stomach aches and headaches
- Ongoing desire to stay home from school and wanting to stay away from friends

**Preschool Aged Children**

- Maintain regular family routines.
- Make an extra effort to provide comfort and reassurance.
- Limit exposure to television and other forms of media.
- Avoid unnecessary separations.
- Permit a child to sleep in the parents’ room temporarily.
- Encourage expression of feelings and emotions through play, drawing and storytelling.
- Develop a family safety plan for future incidents.

**Elementary Aged Children**

- Provide extra attention and consideration.
- Set gentle but firm limits for acting out behavior.
- Always make time to listen to a child’s telling of their traumatic experience.
- Encourage expression of thoughts and feelings through casual conversation and play.

**Pre-Adolescents and Adolescents**

- Provide responsibilities and activities that are structured, but not too demanding.
- Rehearse family safety measures for future incidents.
- Point out kind deeds and the ways in which people helped each other during the traumatic event.

**Additional Resources**

- **National Mental Health Information Center and Mental Health Services Locator**
  800-789-2647 | www.samhsa.gov
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
  800-273-TALK
- **SAMHSA National Helpline**
  800-662-HELP

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