



Information for Teaching staff

Websites for adults to share with children-

Advice if you're upset by the news-<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/13865002>

For Teaching and support staff-

- Allow children the space to think with you and talk about their worries or what they have seen.
- Try to answer questions when they are asked -offering truthful and age appropriate information- think about using language that describes that people sometimes do bad things rather than saying there are 'bad people' and avoid complicated and confusing explanations. It is ok to say that we don't know everything.
- You can let them know as a class or in a school assembly that staff are available to listen if required and look out for children who you may expect me more affected or children whose behaviour suggests they may be struggling (look out for sudden changes in behaviour)
- Offer reassurance, Is it possible to normalise the event or present a more balanced view- sometimes statistics can be helpful, thoughts about the media only presenting a version of events, wonder with children about how big the world is? How often they have heard of such events?
- If you are over hear a conversation or play between peers about a concern that maybe being misconstrued or may lead to increased anxiety amongst the peer group– think is it possible to join the conversation? Be curious don't correct.... In order to first listen to the experiences, feelings and emotions and if necessary to present a more balanced view.

- Empathically listen and be curious- notice emotions, worries, things that are said and those things that are not said- hidden worries- hidden needs- eg/ are they worried they may get hurt? They are not safe? Are they worried about their parents, siblings?

It can be helpful to 'wonder'- eg' I noticed.....I wonder if you were feeling....'

- Not all children are able to put their experiences and feelings into words, they may 'play out' their worries or use art to express their understanding- having an empathic adult present during this play can be hugely helpful
- Validate their worries and let them know that even as adults we have worries
- Can you share with them, a story that may help?-

-A book about importance of sharing worries (eg-'*Huge bag of worries*')

- A book to allow them to connect to own feelings (eg-'*A Great big book of feelings*')

A book that shares some helpful ways of managing worries or a struggle to relax (eg-'*Sitting Still Like a Frog. Mindfulness Exercises for Kids (and Their Parents)*')

-A book that restores their faith in the world and relationships (eg/'*The smallest whale*' or '*the whale and the snail*')

- Notice any positives- the helpers-those taxi drivers that drove people out of the city, the hotels that offered a safe space to stay.

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping. To this day, especially in times of disaster, I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers — so many caring people in this world.' — Fred Rogers

For more information about Play Therapy and related information-

www.bapt.info/

<https://www.facebook.com/BAPT1992/>

<https://www.facebook.com/Ninaridsdale2007/>

A helpful article-

Gretchen Schmelzer

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[Five Things to Help our Children \(and Ourselves\) after a Traumatic Event.](#)

“Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that.”

— Martin Luther King Jr.

We have witnessed so many shootings. So many struggling refugees. “How do I help my children understand the violence?” “How do I help them understand the struggle and the grief?” “How do I protect them from the news?” What can I do to help them feel better?” What can I do to help myself feel better?”

Trauma shatters. That is true regardless of the trauma. It shatters our sense of trust. It shatters our sense of stability. It shatters our sense of safety. The physiological responses to trauma set off alarm systems in our bodies that make us capable of running away or freezing on the spot—which is designed to help us survive. But trauma shuts down our ability to take in a wide variety of information, and it often has us in survival mode of shutting down and avoiding, rather than staying active and reaching out.

And unfortunately, these events seem to be happening more frequently so it seems important that parents and really, all of us, understand the impact of these traumatic events and how best to recover, heal and strengthen our resilience. What can you do as a parent to help your children and yourself during these stressful events?

First: Turn off your television. Do not reinforce the traumatic experience at the emotional or neurological level. Our visual systems are highly connected to our amygdalas –the fear centers of our brain. Constant watching of traumatic images helps strengthen a neural pathway for a frightening event. News is 24 hours and the event already happened. You and especially your children do not need to watch the events of a shooting over and over. A different camera angle may help the FBI catch the perpetrator but all you will get is another experience of fear and helplessness. For you as an adult you will be activating your stress response system each time you watch it—and this will not help you create a calming environment for your kids or anyone around you. Television is problematic for children for

different reasons. Because they are more reliant on imagination and fantasy they may not understand that what is being shown repeated footage—they may believe that it is continuing to happen.

Second: Trauma shatters our experience of safety so we all seek some reassurance that our loved ones are okay, and we want to believe that this will never happen to us. While you can't promise them that nothing bad will ever happen to you or to them, you can reassure them that you will do everything in your power to protect yourselves and them. You can say that there are bad people in the world who do harm to people, but that most of the people in the world aren't like that. You can talk about all of the people who helped the people who were hurt: the policemen, the nurses, the doctors, the men and women of the national guard, the FBI and law enforcement. You can talk about how quickly people helped. You help the children see that in bad situations people can help.

Third: Trauma shatters our sense of trust and stability. The antidote to this is to attend to your routines. Breakfast, lunch, dinner. Bath, books, bedtime. Consistent routine help all people, not just children, feel more solid and secure. If trauma is about being caught off guard and thrust into the unknowable, familiar and nurturing routine help us feel more contained and safe. It can be tempting to let them slide and you may get more push back to the usual routine. Don't give in if you can help it. Stick to the routine. Let them cry. Hug them tighter. And the routines apply to us as adults too—go to work, attend your meetings, keep up with the routines and rituals of your life.

Fourth: The hallmark of trauma is helplessness. At the moment of trauma we are rendered helpless to protect ourselves and others. Often this experience of helplessness is the most significant symptom. One of the greatest antidotes to trauma and the experience of helplessness is to help. Be active. Reach out. Especially for children it can be very healing to be able to do something to help. I know most people think, "What can children do?" But they can do a lot. In response to the actual traumatic event they can draw or paint pictures for the victims and you can mail them to the hospitals near the tragedy—or for the nurses and doctors and physical therapists or counselors who will work with the victims Or for the firefighters or police officers. Or for the other students and professors at the school. There isn't a teacher or a police officer in the world who isn't moved by a thank you card painted by a child. It helps your child feel better and it reinforces for the helpers their passion for what they do.

Or, you could look around your world and think about the people who need help closer to home? Who might need a picture, or cookies, or a song? What relative haven't you connected with in a while?

Which brings me to my last and Fifth point that can help all of us. True to Martin Luther King Jr.'s words—only light and love can drive out the darkness and hate. This week we experienced this darkness again, and once again we all need to work together to bring in the light. Let's resolve each day to bring a little more light and a little more love: smile more, let the person in front of you pull in to traffic, pay someone's toll or coffee, offer to get up and let someone who looks tired sit down, bring dinner to a friend or neighbor in need, call your pastor or minister and ask if there is someone who could use a little more support this week, plant a few more flowers. As a Girl Scout we were always taught to leave a place cleaner than we found it, and perhaps more now than ever we need the corollary—to leave a place 'lighter' or 'more loving' than we found it. Talk to each other. Reach out.

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