

# HELPING YOUR CHILD

## WITH MEDIA REPORTED DISASTERS

*Keeping in mind that parents are generally in the best position to assist their children in coping with their concerns and emotions, the following are some suggestions-*

### Limit Your Children's Viewing of TV Images

- Be present when your children are viewing any television reports or listening to the radio. The repetitive graphic images may traumatize your younger children.
- Take breaks from the television and return to your regular family routines. We all can become transfixed with media coverage.

### Talk With Your Children & Listen to What They Say

- Pick a quiet place where you will not be interrupted.
- Ask your children what they know about the events and if they have any questions. Listen to what your children have to say.
- Keeping in mind the age of the children, provide important missing details and correct any misinformation.
- While you need to be honest, younger children do not require as much detail as you might think.
- Older children and teens may need more discussion and explanation from parents to understand what is happening.

### Listen to Your Children's Fear, Sadness, & Anger

- While it is okay to share your own feelings with your children, remember that children take their cues from their parents' responses.
- Normalize your children's feelings such as fear, anger, and confusion. Let your children know these feelings are natural and appropriate.
- As teens and young adult children may be struggling with a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, parents can continue to guide and reassure them.
- Parents may work through their own emotions by sharing their feelings with their partner or other adults.



## Respond to Your Children's Concerns About Safety

- Your children need to be reassured that they and their family are safe.
- During this time, leave numbers where your children can reach you.
- Children can be told that this happened far away from their home and will not be happening to them.
- Let them know that many people are doing their best to make sure this never happens again.
- In a few weeks, review family safety procedures in the home, regarding fire or earthquake survival.

## Be Patient With Your Children & Yourself

- Give your children extra time and attention.
- Children's reactions to these events can be varied. Some children may appear to be coping well, while others may be acting out.
- These extraordinary events will require time to resolve.
- Continue to remain available for talking and listening while events unfold.
- These events may trigger reactions from previous traumas or loss in your children's lives.
- Be prepared to offer support and understanding.

## Monitor Your Children for Temporary Symptoms of Stress

- These behaviours, including clinging, nightmares, nervousness, etc should be short lived. Typically they are not signs of more serious problems.
- If these behaviours persist, seek professional help.
- Make every effort to ensure a return to the family's normal routine.



## Seek Support From Extended Family & Church

- Participate in community activities that may assist survivors or commemorate the enormous losses.
- Continue to review with your children the positive efforts being made worldwide to help those who were harmed by the events.
- Your family may also feel empowered by offering support to others in need.

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