

# AFTER TRAUMA



## SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD:

Have thoughts of suicide  
(ending own life).

Have thoughts of hurting  
self or others.

Have thoughts  
of dying.

**Go to the Emergency Room or call, text or chat 988 anytime to talk with someone at the confidential National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.**

Your child has been through a trauma. A trauma is an event that happens to you or that you witness that makes you concerned for your safety or the safety of others. It is normal for our bodies to go “on alert” after experiencing trauma. In the first few days after a stressful event, a child may experience symptoms such as:

### Physical

- Jumpiness
- Change in appetite, stomachaches
- Headache
- Feeling tired, sleeping more, difficulty sleeping or falling asleep

### Emotional and Behavioral

- Crying a lot
- Clingy with parents
- Easily irritated
- Difficulty concentrating – may struggle to focus at school or at the dinner table

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## How long should these symptoms last?

A child's reactions to trauma can be brief and they may recover without any problems. When a child's reactions to trauma continue, they may need extra help.

## When to Seek Help from a Professional Counselor

When a child's reactions to trauma persist, they may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). PTSD can interfere with a child's healthy development and can lead to long-term difficulties with school, jobs, relationships, and overall well-being.

## What can I do to help my child?

### Consider what they need

- Just like adults, each child will have their own reactions to a traumatic event. They may share your thoughts and feelings, or they may have completely different ones.
- There is no one-size-fits-all approach to conversations about traumatic events. You know your child best. You know what may help them process difficult news.
- If your child has intellectual and developmental disabilities, they may react differently to a traumatic event than a neurotypical child. They may find comfort with different things too. Think about what calms your child in other stressful situations and ask yourself if that might help in this instance.

### Ask questions before giving answers

- Before you give information or advice, ask about what they are thinking. Ask them what questions or worries they have.
- The more listening you do, the better.

### **Let your child know they are safe**

- Unexpected, traumatic events can cause a child to worry and be scared. It is common for children to think something bad may happen to them following a scary event.
- Let them know you are there for them. Comfort them with extra hugs and extra time together.
- If the traumatic event was due to violent acts, let them know that you and safety officials are working to keep them safe and secure. If appropriate, make a safety plan together as a family.

### **Keep structure and a daily routine**

- You can help lessen your child's anxiety and worries by letting them know what comes next. It is important for them to understand that the family rules continue.

### **What About Me?**

It is normal to have many different feelings when your child has experienced a trauma. Strong feelings can lead to anxiety, depression, or make you feel stuck. We encourage you to get support from friends, family, and counselors. Talking with others can help you, guide you, and remind you that you are not alone.

### **Need help finding therapy resources for yourself or your child?**

Call a referral navigator at **1-816-412-9421**. A trained mental health counselor will answer your call **24/7** and complete a short intake including demographic and safety questions. You will receive a call back within one business day to coordinate a referral to ongoing services. There is no charge for this referral service.



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