



Supporting your child.

For a parent or guardian, a traumatic event is frightening. It can be even more frightening and unsettling for children. Like the adults around them, they too experienced the same event. The children in your life have also been exposed to the same photographs, stories in print media and television images and will need your reassurance that they are safe with you. It is important to let them know that it is healthy to express emotions and to let them out. During this time, children will likely be highly sensitive and attentive to the adult responses surrounding them.

What you can do:

Place

- Don't leave your child alone in a new place
- Reassure them that they're in a safe place
- Bedtime may be difficult. Your child may be afraid of the dark, not want to sleep away from you and/or may have nightmares or begin to wet the bed again
- Stay together to show you won't go away
- As long as it can be done safely, let your child help clean up



Talk



- Say it is OK to be afraid and let them know that you were afraid too
- Explain, talk and listen, both about the disaster and anything else they want to discuss
- Put order in your day as best you can and tell your child about your plans each day

Comfort



- Be attentive to media coverage adding to you and your child's stress level
- Hold and hug

What you can do at bedtime



- Explain why it gets dark
- Praise your child for good things
- Agree on a time for your child to go to bed
- Read to your child
- Talk about dreams
- Don't yell
- Leave the light on and the door ajar
- Tell a story about something good that happened that day

It is important to help your child externalize the feelings. Keeping reactions inside will only serve to have them go into hiding and come back when least expected. Also speak with other parents, caregivers, your child's teacher, or school principal to discuss other ideas and suggestions, support and resources.