

Coping with Traumatic Events: Terrorist Attacks in the United States

Special Comments for Children and Youth

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1. **Spend time with friends, teachers and parents.** When we talk with each other about tragic events it helps us. While each of us is affected in a different way it is through our caring relationships that we find the support to bear pain and to heal. This event reminds us of how fleeting and precious life is. Talk with the people in your life. As you struggle to make sense of this, it is a good time to think about what you do believe and what is most important in your life.
2. **Try not to watch it again and again on television.** Seeing these images over and over will not help you make sense of it. The images are horrifying yet we are attracted to them. That is common. But by seeing this again and again, you distort things. Young children may even think that there are hundreds of attacks rather than four. If you are watching and your younger siblings are around, turn off the TV. You may be able to handle this, but they will certainly distort things.
3. **Don't let this make you feel unsafe in your home or school.** Your home and your school are still safe. Steps are being taken to make things even safer.
4. **Don't be surprised if you can't get it out of your mind.** It is normal for your mind to take "unbelievable" events and go over them again and again. This may include images from this event popping into your head or dreams or things like the sound of an airplane causing you to think about this again. Over time, this will get better.
5. **Even though you may be far away from this event, don't be surprised if you have very strong feelings about it.** Watching this on TV and having everyone talk about it makes it feel closer. It was a horrible thing. And you may find yourself overcome with sadness, fear, confusion and anger. This is normal. With time, these feelings will get less powerful too.
6. **These feelings will be change from moment to moment.** You may find that out of the blue you are thinking about this and crying. You may have a hard time falling asleep. You may be scared to think of your parent traveling on a plane or working in a public place. One moment you will be fine, the next so sad and another so angry. This emotional rollercoaster can be exhausting and you will find yourself feeling tired and having trouble concentrating. For most of us, this will pass.
7. **Don't direct your anger at the wrong people.** Don't let the hate that led to this terrorism spread. Do not lump all people of a certain ethnicity or religion into the same group. This was the work of a small group of hateful people. Blame them, not some kid in your class who is different from you.
8. **If you feel very sad, scared or angry, tell your teacher or parents.** Sometimes these things can be too much. If you find that your emotions are too strong, tell some adult you trust. Don't be afraid to reach out for help.

About the ChildTrauma Academy

The ChildTrauma Academy is a unique collaborative of individuals and organizations working to improve the lives of high-risk children through direct service, research and education. These efforts are in partnership with the public and private systems that are mandated to protect, heal and educate children. For more information see: <http://www.ChildTrauma.org>

About the Author

Dr. Perry is the Provincial Medical Director of Children's Mental Health Services for the Alberta Mental Health Board. He is an internationally-recognized authority on children in crisis. In addition, Dr. Perry serves as the Senior Fellow of the ChildTrauma Academy. Both a clinician and a researcher, Dr. Perry has been consulted on many high-profile incidents involving traumatized children including the Branch Davidian siege in Waco and the Oklahoma bombing.

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