

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## Through Common Reactions to Distress



### FOR 3 TO 6 YEAR OLDS

As with babies, 3-6 year olds typically respond to situations according to how parents react. If you are calm and confident, your child will feel more secure. If you act anxious or overwhelmed, your child may feel unsafe.

What you can do:

- Make your child feel safe. Hold, hug and cuddle them as much as possible. Tell them you will take care of them when they feel sad or scared.
- Watch what you say. Little children have big ears and may pick up on your anxiety, misinterpret what they hear, or be frightened unnecessarily by things they do not understand.
- Maintain routines as much as possible.
- Give extra support at bedtime. It's okay to make a temporary arrangement for young children to sleep with you, but with the understanding that they will go back to normal sleeping arrangements at a set future date.
- Do not expose kids to the news. Young children tend to confuse facts with fears. They may not realize that the images they see on the news aren't happening again and again. They should also not listen to the radio.
- Encourage children to share feelings. Try a simple question such as, "How are you feeling today?" Help them name how they feel. Let them know it is okay to feel that way, then show them the right way to behave
- Young children often do well expressing emotions with drawing. This is another opportunity to provide explanations and reassurance.
- Distraction is a good thing for kids at this age. Play games or arrange for digital connections with others.
- Talk about things that are going well. Even in the most trying times, it's important to identify something positive and express hope for the future to help your child recover.

### INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM

Helping Children Cope After a Traumatic Event:

<https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-traumatic-event/>

**PLEASE VISIT HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION**