

# SUPPORTING CHILDREN AND YOUTH

## Through Common Reactions to Distress



### FOR PRETEENS AND TEENAGERS

Adolescence is already a challenging time for young people, who have so many changes happening in their bodies. They struggle with wanting more independence from parents, and have a tendency to feel nothing can harm them. Traumatic events can make them feel out of control, even if they act as if they are strong. They will also feel bad for people affected by the disaster, and have a strong desire to know why the event occurred.

#### What you can do:

- Make your teen feel safe again. Adolescents do not like to show vulnerability; they may try to act as if they are doing fine even though they are not. While they may resist hugs, your touch can help them feel secure. You can say something like, "I know you're grown now, but I just need to give you a hug."
- Help teens feel helpful. Give them small tasks and responsibilities in the household, then praise them for what they have done and how they have handled themselves.
- Do not overburden teens with too many responsibilities, especially adult-like ones, as that will add to their anxiety.
- Open the door for discussion. It's very typical for teens to say they don't want to talk. Try to start a conversation while you are doing an activity together, so that the conversation does not feel too intense or confrontational.
- Consider peer groups. Some teenagers may feel more comfortable talking in groups with their peers, so consider organizing one. Also encourage conversation with other trusted adults, like a relative or teacher.
- Limit exposure to TV, newspapers and radio. While teens can better handle the news than younger kids, those who are unable to detach themselves from TV or the radio may be trying to deal with anxiety in unhealthy ways. Talk with your teen about the things they have seen or heard.
- Help your teen take action. Kids this age will want to help the community. Find appropriate volunteer opportunities.
- Teens are particularly at risk for turning to alcohol or drugs to numb their anxiety. If your teen has been behaving secretly or is seemingly drunk or high, get in touch with a doctor. And talk to your teen in a kind way.

**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**