

Parents Help To Children In Bad Times

Shocking things happen, and it's unavoidable that our children are exposed to them; sometimes they occur in our communities, in the form of natural disasters like floods or fires, or man-made crises like car or plane accidents, or violent episodes like shootings or bombings. More frequently, though, the mass media bring graphic and immediate news of major national calamities such as the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the bombings in Oklahoma City and Atlanta's Centennial Park, or the crash of TWA Flight 800, into the homes of people across the country. In reality, these days it's becoming more and more difficult to prevent children from experiencing such disasters through the media. While exposing to catastrophes, children often display fears and anxieties.

As these are normal; however, without proper assurance, the impact of events like these can remain with children throughout their lives. Through the right support and guidance, even very young children can become resilient enough to weather the most traumatic disaster, and grow stronger from the experience. Kids who experience a disaster, or see news of it on television, may react with shock and their sense of security may be shattered. Children may be reluctant to stay alone or go out of the house, may express fears of the dark or going to sleep, or may report nightmares or symptoms of illness. Parents must express their love for children more than usual, both verbally and physically, raising the level of affection and warmth in the home will help children feel calm.

Try to maintain normal routines, to help children's sense of stability also be available to children when they need to talk about the disaster. Do read stories with children about disasters and how people deal with them, discuss the kinds of emotional reactions people have to disasters, explaining that it's OK to feel afraid or angry. Also tell children about the people—police, firefighters, emergency rescue teams—who bring disasters under control, and explain how they are always there to help last but not the least develop and discuss home safety and emergency procedures. Adolescent people who have witnessed or experienced a disaster may feel victimized, vulnerable, depressed, or distrustful. Numerous may lack the inner strength to deal with those feelings; they may come to believe that the world is evil, and that they are helpless to respond to that evil.

A few even perceive disasters as a kind of punishment for their own "bad" behavior or thoughts. Put experiences into words gives children a sense of more control, explain to them that disasters are real. Do talk about past disasters they may or may not have been aware of, such as those mentioned above. Try to explain why they happened and what (if anything) can be done to prevent similar things from happening again.

About the Author

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