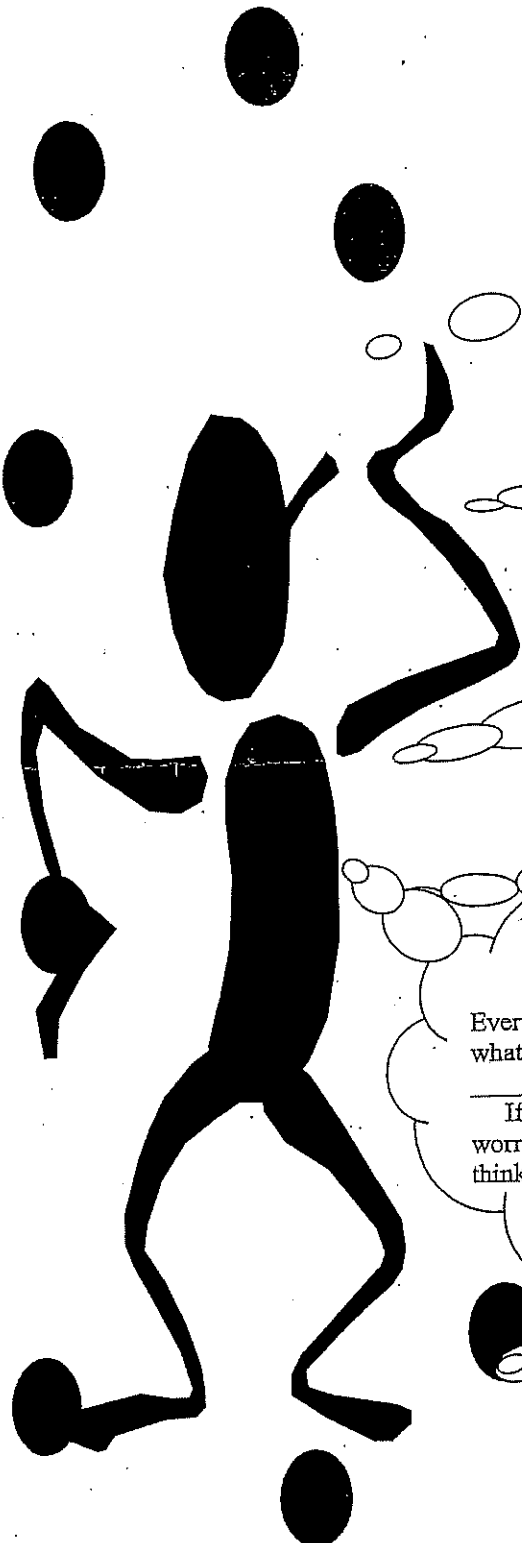


Parents Reactions to Loss and Trauma



Anxiety

I have to be strong
My child is scarred for life
I can't stop worrying
This is too horrible to talk about
I can't stop thinking about it
I feel unsafe
I don't know what I am going to do

Guilt

If only I would have said/done
It was my fault

Fear

I'm afraid it is going to happen again
I don't think I can handle this
I can't let myself think about it
I can't sleep at night

Powerlessness, Helplessness

I don't know if I can trust anyone
I should have protected my child
I am afraid of the future
I can't afford to be wrong.

Worry

Every time I think about
what happened, I worry that

If anyone knows I'm
worrying like this, they'll
think I'm overreacting

Sadness

I shouldn't feel this way
Nothing is enjoyable right now

Anger

I feel rage toward what has
happened
This should have never
happened

Denial

My child doesn't need to
know what happened

My child is too young to be
affected by this

The sooner we forget about it
the better

What Can You Do?

Reassure your child or teen that he or she is safe, and that you are also okay by doing the following:

- Listen!
- Maintain routines.
- Turn the television off or allow your child to only watch shows that aren't covering the incident. (Adolescents may need to watch because, like adults, they have a need to know. Keep it to a minimum – no more than a half-hour and be sure to discuss what your child saw and heard by asking questions and listen carefully to his responses and opinions.)
- Do not criticize any regressive behaviors, such as a child's need for comfort food. Allow your child to be sad or afraid. Reassure your child that you will be there to take care of him. Tell your child that the sadness, hurt, or fear that he may feel now will change in time.
- Encourage your child to exercise some sense of control for the next few days by letting him make decisions about what he wants to eat, and wear.
- Spend time together. This means together, not you in one part of the house while your child is in another part of the house.
- Encourage your child to engage in physical activities as well as activities that let him feel better. (Your school is likely involving students in activities to help survivors. Join them.)
- In the event of terrorism, explain that it is normal to feel sad or worried but the United States is a strong country and officials are working hard to keep everyone safe.
- When needed, help separate fact from fiction: Fiction tends to escalate one's fears.
- Do not speculate or exaggerate

When to Look for Help

1. If a child is physically hurting him/herself or others
2. If a child's reactions have gone on for 2- 3 months with no change
3. If a child shows several of the behaviors listed below:
 - a. Sleep troubles, fear of falling asleep
 - b. Headaches, stomachaches
 - c. Increased aggressive behavior
 - d. A VERY high activity level
 - e. Constant worry about danger
 - f. Loss of skills learned earlier
 - g. Withdrawing from friends and activities
 - h. Not showing feelings about anything
 - i. Worrying a lot about the safety of loved ones
 - j. Having trouble concentrating
 - k. Repetitive play about the loss or trauma