

Helping Children Cope

When a critical incident hits a family, the child often has to deal not only with the incident itself, but with the unavailability of his/her parents, who are, themselves, consumed with the incident. One of a child's greatest fears is the loss or unavailability parents when he/she needs them. This fear often becomes fact in a critical incident.

- Reassure your child that everyone in the family is safe now, and that you are going to be all right.
- It is important to talk to your child about what happened. Give them the basic facts and share with them your feelings; this lets your child know that it is safe for him/her to talk about their feelings as well. Encourage your child to talk by asking how they feel about what happened.
- Ask your child what they are hearing at school and on the news, about the incident.
- Keep all promises you make to your child during this time, or don't make promises that you cannot keep. It is important for your child to know that he/she can rely on you when things seem chaotic due to a critical incident.
- Younger children may need more physical closeness and may need to be held more.
- Maintain your family routine as much as possible, and inform your child of changes to that routine.
- Inform teachers and school counselors of what has happened, and how your child seems to be reacting.
- Try to have some family time each day, and reassure your child that you will all get through this.
- Have some fun together.