

Helping Children Cope in a Time of Crisis

(Adapted from National Association of School Psychologists – Large Scale National Disasters: Helping Children Cope.)

- **Limit media exposure**

Research from past national disasters has shown that the more media exposure a child experiences, the more likely the child is to have negative emotional reactions after the event. Exposure to endless news might not be helpful.

- **Do something positive with your children or students to help others in need.**

For example, write letters/cards for individuals in nursing homes who currently are unable to have visitors. Call/email relatives and friends, especially older adults.

- **Be a good listener and observer.**

Let children guide you as to how concerned they are or how much information they need. If they are not focused on the tragedy, don't dwell on it. Be available to answer their questions to the best of your ability. Young children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Pay attention to changes in their behavior or social interactions.

- **Highlight people's compassion and humanity and emphasize people's resiliency.**

Highlight stories about people's positive responses to the crisis.

- **Maintain as much continuity and normalcy as possible.**

Maintain a "school schedule" Monday-Friday.

- **Talk to your children and students in an age appropriate manner about the crisis.**

Some children may not want or need to talk about the event so do not force them to talk. Acknowledge and normalize their feelings. Let them know that others share their feelings and that their reactions are common and expected.

Provide time for a creative outlet based on your child's interests (write in a journal, draw, dance, sing)