



Helping Your Child Recover From Trauma

Emotional scars from traumatic events can take years to heal. That's why it's important to address the ongoing mental health of those who are most vulnerable: our children. Thankfully, any parent, teacher, or adult who works with children can be a possible source of healing when armed with the right tools.

Signs of Distress

All children grieve differently. Here are some common signs that a child could be struggling to adjust.

- Trouble sleeping
- Separation anxiety
- Fear of going to school
- Trouble concentrating
- Withdrawal
- Increased irritability or anxiety
- Loss of academic performance
- Regressive behaviors in young children (bedwetting, tantrums)
- Depression, lack of interest in activities they usually enjoy
- Substance abuse
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or fatigue
- No symptoms after experiencing a significant trauma



Learn more at
scoe.org/traumahelp



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What You Can Do

A supportive response can help a child heal and even grow after a traumatic experience. Here are a few tips:

- **Be there:** Perhaps the most important thing you can do is talk with—and listen to—your children. Be sure to let them know it is OK to ask questions and share their feelings. Let their questions guide the conversation and avoid pressuring them to talk.
- **Be flexible with expectations:** Patience, flexibility, and extra attention can all give children the room they need to heal. This can include gentle reminders or added help with chores or homework.
- **Be a role model:** Children take cues for how to handle stressful situations from their parents, according to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Do your best to model calm behaviors and healthy self-care.
- **Take care of yourself:** You may be familiar with the advice “put your own air mask on first.” You can’t be a good role model if you are struggling yourself. Take time to make sure you are eating and sleeping well, getting exercise, and receiving proper medical care.
- **Seek professional help:** If a child you care for has shown signs of distress for a prolonged period of time, consider consulting with a mental health professional for an evaluation.