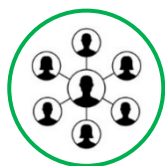




## WEEKLY UPDATE | August 2, 2021



### Supporting and Understanding Trauma During COVID-19



In the wake of a disturbing event or tragic loss in the lives of children, we know parents and teachers will do their best to help kids cope with their [grief](#) and [anxiety](#) in a healthy way. We have provided some tips on how best to engage kids in a calm and supportive dialog about their feelings—it's certainly not easy to do, but it can make a big difference to kids.

Still, some children are more at risk than others for suffering long-term effects from an upsetting event, including those who have [lost close friends](#) or classmates and those who might have learned about the event or loss in a particularly emotional and upsetting way.

How a child experiences an event and how it's handled by those around him have an effect on how traumatizing it can be, notes Child Mind Institute psychologist Dr. Jerry Bubrick. When families come upon news accidentally, parents can be caught off guard and respond in a highly emotional way that can impact children. Television coverage and shocking newspaper headlines can also amplify the impact of a disturbing event or loss.

So even as you try to [soothe and comfort children](#), it is important to recognize the signs of unhealthy coping that would suggest a visit with a professional might be needed. In extreme cases, children can develop [post-traumatic stress disorder](#), but even less extreme PTSD-like symptoms can interfere with a child's life and happiness. Here are some signs to look for and things to keep in mind.

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NATIONAL CENTER ON  
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## Head Start Heals - Frequently Asked Questions

### Supporting and Understanding Trauma During COVID-19

Follow the link and find more about Head Start Heals and how to support children and families.

#### **Q. What are signs of trauma in young children?**

Children who have lived through a frightening or life threatening situation may react in many different ways. Young children (including infants and toddlers) may have difficulties with eating and sleeping. They may be very fearful and easily startled, especially when something reminds them

of the situation that scared them. Some, including children who have been separated from loved ones, may become clingy or show extreme anxiety at separation, such as at drop-off in the morning. Some children seem plainly unhappy, passive and unresponsive, while others cry easily and seem very hard to soothe. Preschoolers may re-play the frightening event over and over again or keep talking about it. They may have physical symptoms (like stomach aches) or revert to behaviors (for example, like bed wetting, ) that they had left behind. Some children become easily overwhelmed, inattentive, or overactive or have difficulties with peers. If you have concerns about the distress you are witnessing, do not hesitate to reach out to your mental health consultant or social services team.

Additional Resources:

Trauma Signs for Children

<https://childmind.org/article/signs-trauma-children/>

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/about-us/coronavirus/supporting-children-families-during-covid-19>



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# Stay CONNECTED WEEKLY UPDATE

## Q. How can I support infants and toddlers with their feelings?

First, never underestimate the protective and healing power of a nurturing relationship and a calm, safe, predictable environment. Focus on your relationship with each child through repeated, loving connections throughout the day.

- Give the child your full attention while positioned face to face, with a gentle voice and gentle touch.
- Make sure each child and parent feel warmly welcomed and at ease.
- Make sure the day is infused with fun and soothing activities and positive feedback.
- Maintain a predictable and calm routine, supported at each step by visual cues like pictures so children have the comfort of knowing what comes next.

Remember that infants and toddlers understand best when you speak with short phrases paired with big gestures, objects, or pictures. When they seem ready, start teaching the words for emotions using Feeling Faces, starting with a few at a time, and ask them to point out their own feelings.

Label emotions that you observe in the children or in stories (“you look mad!” or “doggy feels sad”) and also in yourself, so that children can start to understand the feelings they experience. (If you are wearing a mask, it will be especially important to describe your own feelings.) Read books that support social emotional learning. Remind yourself to first connect at eye level (“You look mad!” or “You want the truck!”) before you gently correct with positive reminders (“We touch gently”) or coach more peaceful behavior, for example: “Ask him: my turn?”.

### Additional Resources:

Helping Us Calm Down: Strategies for Children <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/resources/index.html>

Activities for Families to Support Emotions/Feelings <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/activity-ideas-families.pdf>

Tucker the Turtle Social Story - Home Version | [https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/TuckerTurtle\\_Social\\_Story\\_Home.pdf](https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/TuckerTurtle_Social_Story_Home.pdf)

Supporting Deep Breathing for Young Children <https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/docs/Smell-Blow.pdf>

Effective Practice Guides Emotional Functioning Improve

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/emotional-functioning-improve>

Effective Practice Guides/Social Emotional Development

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/social-emotional-development>



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- ▶ **How can I help my families deal with stress and anxiety during this pandemic?**

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**“An investment in knowledge pays the best dividends.”**

*- Benjamin Franklin-*

