

How to support your child after trauma (ages 6 – 12 years)



What you may notice

- Sleep problems like not wanting to go to bed at night, trouble falling asleep, trouble staying asleep, trouble staying in their own bed or having nightmares
- Changes in what and when they eat and drink
- New problems with milestones already met – they may act more like a baby and want attention
- Act clingier, more demanding or more difficult
- May feel scared when apart from parents or loved ones
- Changes in how they act with brothers and/or sisters like getting more competitive or aggressive
- May need to “relive” the trauma by doing things like drawing or acting it out
- Health complaints like stomach aches and headaches with no clear cause
- May not want to go to school
- May have behavior problems at school
- May not do as well in school

Ways you can support your child

- If needed, stay in your child's room while they are going to sleep. Do this instead of them coming to your room to keep their routine as close to normal as possible
- Be careful when talking with other adults around your child – remember your child pays attention to what you say and do
- Give your child basic facts about what happened and why it happened. Use kid-friendly language in a way they can understand
- If you do not know why the trauma happened, it is okay to say, “I don’t know”
- Help your child to process their feelings. This also helps you to tell whether they understand what happened or whether they have false beliefs
- Allow your child to share their feelings with you or a trusted adult of their choosing
- Let your child know that feeling sad or upset is normal
- Tell them how you are feeling too, but do not “overload” them with details
- You may need to explain adult reactions to stress
- Keep their routine as close to normal as possible
- Let your child’s teachers know about the trauma

Call your child’s doctor if you believe your child needs help right away. If your child is still upset or worried after a few weeks, talk with your child’s doctor or school counselor.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child’s doctor or a member of your child’s healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.