



Disaster and Trauma Effects on Parents

Parents' response to trauma and/or disaster events varies and can be based upon previous trauma, life cycle transitions and/or other life stressors. In addition, parental impact is affected based upon proximity and duration to the disaster/trauma event, threats to their own and others' lives or injuries, and/or destruction of their homes and/or community, and temporary or permanent displacement.

Signs and Symptoms of Parents' Stress Reactions

- Sadness
- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Withdrawal
- Heightened arousal and startle response
- Self destructive behaviors such as sexual activities, substance abuse, risk taking, etc.
- Suicidal ideation
- Anxiety
- Frustration
- Anger
- Aggression
- Concentration problems/short-term memory problems
- Sleeping problems
- Over-eating or under-eating
- Headache, stomach aches, etc.
- Mood swings
- Crying easily
- Reluctance to leave home
- Decline in work performance
- Overprotective behaviors regarding children and dependent family members

Things Parents can do:

- Talk with another grown up about their feelings
- Use existing support systems
- Get adequate rest and sleep
- Eat balanced meals
- Stay active, move around
- Stay connected with family and friends
- Maintain normal household routines when possible or establish new routines
- Do things that promote good health, e.g. exercise, relax, do something fun, etc.
- Seek professional help if talking with others does not seem to help

On-line Resources:

Disaster Help for Parents and Children <http://www.childadvocate.net/disaster.htm>

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