

Healing the Invisible Wounds: Children's Exposure to Violence

●
Young Children (0-6)

What To Look For and How to Help:

● ●
School-aged (7-11)

●
Adolescents

Signs

- Cries more than usual
- Becomes less responsive
- Cries when you leave
- Eats more or doesn't want to eat
- Sleeps all the time or has trouble sleeping
- Has frequent temper tantrums
- Behaves like a younger child
- Asks many questions about the event
- Startles easily

What to do

- Schedule time alone with you
- Soothe by singing and rocking
- Keep a regular routine
- Use storybooks to talk about feelings
- Shield from violent TV or books
- Don't leave them with people they don't know well
- Explain what will happen ahead of time

Safe Start Center

Web: www.safestartcenter.org

E-mail: info@safestartcenter.org

Telephone: 1-800-865-0965

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Young Children (0-6)

What To Look For and How to Help:

School-aged (7-11)

Adolescents (12-18)

Signs

- Feels responsible for or guilty about the event
- Wants to be left alone
- Seems sad all the time
- Acts very hyper or very spacey
- Gets into trouble at school and at home
- Is more aggressive; gets into fights
- Has nightmares
- Eats more or less than before

What to do

- Listen calmly, without judging
- Tell them what happened is not their fault
- Write down worries and talk about each one
- Help them find a safe place
- Don't make hateful comments
- Teach nonviolent ways to solve problems
- Let them make some decisions

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What To Look For and How to Help:

Signs

Complains about being tired
Thinks about the event all the time
Becomes more rebellious
Wants to seek revenge
Stops caring about their looks
Skips school*
Becomes violent *
Drinks and uses drugs*
Talks about dying*

* Serious concerns requiring professional help

What to do

Be extra patient
Ask, in private, what's wrong
Respond calmly, without judging
Provide safe and fun activities
Encourage spending time with people they trust
Help them make a plan to stay safe
Don't make commitments you can't honor

Additional resources for parents about children's exposure to violence:

Hot Lines

Resources on Children's Exposure to Violence

Information and Resources

Books for Children



National Crime Victim Helpline

1-800-FYI-CALL (394-2255)

Interpreters in 170 languages

Information about what to do if you are the victim of a violent crime and referrals to local services.

National Domestic Violence Hotline

1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

TTY: 1-800-787-3224

Interpreters in 170 languages

Crisis intervention, safety planning, information and referrals for survivors and anyone calling on their behalf.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline

1-800-4-A-CHILD (422-4453)

Interpreters in 170 languages

Information, referrals to emergency and social services, and support for children and adults.



The Safe Start Center is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice

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Child Witness to Violence Project

www.childwitnessstoviolence.org

Family Communications

www.fci.org

Family Violence Prevention Fund

www.endabuse.org

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org

National Mental Health Information Center

www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov

New York University Child Study Center

www.aboutourkids.org

Parenting Resources, USA.gov

www.usa.gov/Topics/Parents.shtml

Zero to Three

www.zerotothree.org



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Information and Resources

Books for Children



3-6 Year Olds

I Do and I Don't, Fred Rogers and Hedda Sharapan
A Terrible Thing Happened: A Story for Children Who Have Witnessed Violence or Trauma, Margaret Holmes

7-11 Year Olds

Something Is Wrong at My House: A Book About Parents' Fighting, Diane Davis
I Can Make My World a Safer Place, Paul Kivel

12-18 Year Olds

Autobiography of My Dead Brother, Walter Dean Myers
The Rules of Survival, Nancy Werlin
The Kids' Guide to Working Out Conflicts: How to Keep Cool, Stay Safe, and Get Along, Naomi Drew

