

# Helping Kids Navigate After a Tragedy

## You know your child best. Most children and teens find it helpful if you:

- Listen to them.
- Answer questions briefly and honestly.
- Let them know they are safe and you are there for them.

## You can say things like...

- Have any of your friends talked about what happened? What did you hear?
- What questions do you have about what you've heard or seen?
- Do you want to write or draw about how you feel?



## Remember to take care of yourself, too.

It's ok to step away and process your own reactions, by yourself or with a trusted friend or counselor. By creating space for yourself, you will be better able to help your kids express their feelings without mixing them up with your own.

## What do I do next?

- **Limit exposure to disturbing media.** Pictures and videos of the event can be scary. Consider monitoring electronics use closely after these events to prevent accidental exposure.
- **Promote your child's resilience.** The more a child can feel safe and tell their story, the less anxious they may be when reminded of the trauma.
- **Read, watch and listen to stories together.** Stories can help kids process traumatic or scary events in an accessible way.
- **Reassure – but not too much.** Too much reassurance can send the message that they should be worried when they are not.



You can find additional support at [cmkc.link/parade](https://cmkc.link/parade).

If you or your child have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, call, text or chat the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988** or visit the Emergency Room.



**Children's Mercy**  
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## What to Watch for: Common Symptoms of PTSD

When a child's reactions to trauma persist after a few weeks, they may develop post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Consider talking to a health care professional if your child's reactions continue for more than 2 to 4 weeks after the event, worsen over time, or affect their usual routines.

- Avoiding people, places or things that bring back memories.
- Panic symptoms (heart palpitations, rapid breathing) when not in danger.
- Withdrawal from family or peers.
- Changes in appearance, not taking care of personal hygiene.
- Feeling shame or blame – “if only” thoughts.
- Feeling sad.
- Increased anger responses.
- Nightmares.
- Memories of the scary event even when they are trying not to think about it.
- Safety concerns – thoughts or threats of self-harm or suicide.
- Trouble with memory – not remembering directions from one homework page to the next. May not remember parts of the trauma.
- Teens may exhibit risk-taking behaviors – using drugs or alcohol, breaking curfew.
- Any other symptoms that interfere with daily activities.

