

**Advice for parents of children
who have experienced a
traumatic event.**

AGED 12-18 YEARS

When a young person, or someone close to a young person experiences a traumatic event they may have physical and emotional reactions.

Below are some ways in which young people can be affected and what other parents have found useful to help their son or daughter cope with and recover from their experiences.

FEELINGS

Anger

A young person may feel angry about what has happened, or at those responsible for the incident. He or she may be angry with a person whom they believe could have done something to prevent it. In some instances this may include anger at themselves and can be expressed through self-harm.

Helplessness

A young person may have been overwhelmed by the feeling that they could not take control of what was happening during the trauma. Afterwards they may have difficulty making decisions and may be very emotional.

Fear

Young people may fear being alone or another traumatic event happening again. They may also be fearful of the feelings they are experiencing after the incident; of losing control or of not being able to cope.

Guilt

Young people may make judgments about their own actions during the event and feel guilty if they think they should have done more.

Worry

They may worry about what others are thinking about them or that the feelings they have will never go away.

Sadness

At first young people may feel numb as if their world is a dream. This may pass and be replaced with sadness. Sometimes it can bring back sadness about other past losses.

Lack of Safety

Young people can think that the world is an unsafe place for them and other people. They may also imagine that they are unlucky, that bad things will happen to them again.

THOUGHTS

Preoccupied

Your son or daughter may be preoccupied with thoughts of what happened and play this in their mind over and over.

Blame

They may think that somehow they brought on the incident or are to blame for what happened.

Revenge

They may wish that the person responsible 'pays' for what happened - may want to be involved in hurting the person as much as they have been hurt.

BEHAVIOURS

Isolation

Your son or daughter may withdraw from family and friends, feel that they are different or that people do not understand them.

Acting Out

Feelings that are difficult to talk about may be expressed through their behaviour. This may be truancy, substance abuse, sexual activity or other risky and potentially dangerous behaviour.

Aggression

They may be more irritable than usual or

behave aggressively towards themselves or others.

Sleep

A young person may experience difficulty getting to sleep or have disturbed sleep patterns. They may be easily woken by noises or nightmares.

Startle

Whether at home or out with family or friends, a young person may startle easily and be on constant lookout for danger. This happens especially with noises related to the event but also by other things that may seem insignificant to other people.

Distress

Thoughts and images of the event that recur even after it is over may easily distress a young person. Symptoms can be so easily triggered by smells, sounds or seeing things that remind them, in some way, of what happened.

Growing Up

Your son or daughter may move rapidly into adulthood as a way of escaping the impact and memory of what has happened. On the other hand they may fear growing up and want to stay close to the family.