

How Infants and Toddlers React to Trauma and How to Help (Birth to 2 years old)

These common reactions to traumatic events are seen in typically developing 0-2 yr. olds. The term traumatic event is being used to describe an overwhelmingly frightening situation that has affected the infant/toddler.

Common Reactions/Behaviors after Exposure to Traumatic Event:

- Acts clingy
- Doesn't want to be alone or away from parents
- Withdraws (doesn't talk or play as much as usual)
- Has trouble sleeping or has nightmares
- Stops doing things they've just learned to do or acts younger than age (starts wetting pants, crawls instead of walks, uses less words)
- Is irritable, scared or fussy

How to Help Your Infant or Toddler:

- Have people who the child knows provide comfort
- Keep the routine the same
- Be patient and use simple, comforting words/sounds
- Create a calm atmosphere
- Give the child his/her favorite toys/blankets for comfort
- Be aware of your own emotions and take care of yourself

If you are worried about your child's behavior or emotions please contact a mental health counselor

Online Resources:

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsnet.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>

After the Injury

<http://www.afterinjury.org/tools-parents-help-their-children-and-themselves-recover-injury>

http://www.afterinjury.org/sites/ati/files/aftertheinjury_helpingmyslefcoppe.pdf

References

Publishing:

Monahan, C. (1997) *Children and trauma: A guide for parents and professionals*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Online:

After the Injury <http://www.aftertheinjury.org/quick-tips>

National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network <http://www.nctsnet.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers>

National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children (TLC) <https://www.starr.org/training/tlc/resources>