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

Created by Jenaya Gordon, MA, CCLS, NCC
Certified Child Life Specialist
Children’s Hospital Colorado
Online Resources:
National Child Traumatic Stress Network
http://www.nctsnet.org/resources/audiences/parents-caregivers

After the Injury

References

Publishing:

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