

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

DON'T bottle up feelings.

DO express your emotions and let your children share in the grief.

DON'T avoid talking about what happened.

DO take every opportunity to review the experience within yourself and with others.

DO allow yourself to be part of a group of people who care.

DON'T let your embarrassment stop you giving others the chance to talk.

DON'T expect the memories to go away - the feelings will stay with you for a long time to come.

DON'T forget that others will experience similar feelings to yourself.

DO take time out to sleep, rest, think and be with your close family and friends.

DO express your needs clearly and honestly to family, friends and officials.

DO try to keep your lives as normal as possible after the acute grief.

DO let other people talk to you and others about their emotions and express themselves in games and drawings.

DO try to attend school and keep up with your usual activities.

DO BE MORE CAREFUL AROUND THE HOME.

WARNING: *ACCIDENTS ARE MORE COMMON
AFTER SEVERE STRESSES.*

WHERE TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP?

If you are attending school, talk to a member of staff who may contact the school's Educational Psychologist on your behalf. Alternatively you may prefer to talk to your GP. Below are a list of local organisations who may also be able to assist

WHO TO CONTACT

- Childline (24 hrs) - 0800 1111
- Cruse Bereavement Care - 0844 477 9400
- Cruse Helpline - 0808 808 1677
- Family, Adolescent and Child Team (FACT) – Woodroffe House, Tolworth Hospital,
- Tolworth KT6 7QU, - 020 3513 5183
- Kingston Bereavement Service - 020 8547 1552
- Samaritans (24 hours) - 08457 90 90 90
- Saying Good Bye Project (KBS) 020 8547 1552
- Winston's Wish – 08452 03 04 05



Advice for Young People Coping with a Major Personal Crisis

This leaflet has been produced to help young people involved in a major incident or disaster. We hope it will also help anyone facing a major personal crisis such as a bereavement.

Kingston Educational Psychology Service

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September 2015

COPING WITH A MAJOR PERSONAL CRISIS

Somebody you know may have died or been injured or you may have witnessed these events. Your experience is a very personal one, but this pamphlet will help you to know how others have reacted in similar situations. It will also show how you can help formal healing to occur and to avoid some pitfalls.

NORMAL FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS ALWAYS EXPERIENCED

FEAR

- of damage to oneself and those we love.
- of being left alone, or having to leave loved ones.
- of "breaking down" or "losing control".
- of a similar event happening again.

HELPLESSNESS

- crises show up human powerlessness, as well as strength.

SADNESS

- for deaths, injuries and losses of every kind.

LONGING

- for all that has gone.

GUILT

- for being alive, not injured, having things.
- regrets for things not done.

SHAME

- for having been exposed as helpless, "emotional" and needing others.
- for not having reacted as one would have wished.

ANGER

- at what happened, at whoever caused it or allowed it to happen.
- at the injustice and senselessness of it all.
- at the shame and indignities.
- at the lack of proper understanding by others, the inefficiencies.
- **WHY ME?**

MEMORIES

- of feeling, of loss or of love for other people in your life who have been injured or died.

LET DOWN - disappointments, which alternate with.

HOPE- for the future for better times.

Everyone has these feelings. The experience of other disasters has shown that they may be particularly intense if: many people died, the death was sudden, violent, or occurred in horrifying circumstances, no body was recovered, there was great dependence on the person who died, the relationship with the person was at a difficult stage or this stress came on top of others.

Nature heals through allowing these feelings to come out.

This will not lead to loss of control of the mind, but stopping these feelings may lead to nervous and physical problems.

Crying gives relief.

PHYSICAL AND MENTAL SENSATIONS— You may feel bodily sensations with or without the feelings described. Sometimes they are due to the crisis, even if they develop many months after the event.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

1. If you feel you cannot handle intense feelings or body sensations.
2. If you feel that your emotions are not falling into place over a period of time, you feel chronic tension, confusion, emptiness or exhaustion.
3. If you continue to have body symptoms.
4. If, after a month, you continue to feel numb and empty and do not have the appropriate feelings described.
5. If you have to keep active in order not to feel.
6. If you continue to have nightmares and poor sleep.
7. If you have no person or group with whom to share your emotions and you feel the need to do so.
8. If your **relationships** seem to be suffering badly, or **sexual problems** develop.
9. If you have **accidents**.
10. If you continue to **smoke, drink** or take **drugs to excess since the event**.
11. If your **work** performance suffers.
12. If you note that those around you are particularly vulnerable or are not healing satisfactorily.
13. If, as a helper, you are suffering "exhaustion".

Some common sensations are tiredness, sleeplessness, bad dreams, fuzziness of the mind including loss of memory and concentration, dizziness, palpitations, shakes, difficulty in breathing, choking in the throat and chest, nausea, diarrhoea, muscular tension which may lead to pain, eg headaches, neck and backaches, dragging in the womb, menstrual disorders, change in sexual interest.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

New friendships and group bonds may come into being. On the other hand, strains in relations may appear. The good feelings in giving and receiving may be replaced by conflict. You may feel that too little or the wrong things are offered, or that you cannot give as much as is expected. Accidents are more frequent after severe stresses. Alcohol and drug intake may increase due to the extra tensions.

THE FOLLOWING MAKE THE EVENTS AND FEELINGS ABOUT THEM SEEM EASIER TO BEAR

NUMBNESS

Your mind may allow the misfortune to be felt only slowly. At first you may feel numb. The event may seem unreal, like a dream, something that has not really happened. People often see this wrongly either as "being strong" or "uncaring".

ACTIVITY

To be active. To help and give to others may give some relief. However over activity is detrimental if it diverts attention from the help you need for yourself.

REALITY

Confronting the reality, e.g. attending funerals, inspecting losses, returning to the scene, will all help you to come to terms with the event

GOING OVER THE TOP

As you allow the disaster more into your mind, there is a need to think about it, to talk about it, and at night to dream about it over and over again. Children play and draw about the event.

SUPPORT

It is a relief to receive people's physical and emotional support. Do not reject it. Sharing with others who have had similar experiences feels good. Barriers can break down and close relationships develop.

PRIVACY

In order to deal with feelings, you will find it necessary at times to be alone, or just be with family and close friends.

Activity and numbness (blocking of feelings) may be over-used and may delay your healing.

HEALING

Remember that the pain of the wound leads to healing. You may even come out wiser and stronger.