

When Talking Isn't Enough to Help Your Child

For some children more active interventions may be required, particularly if they were more directly affected by the traumatic event. The family, as a unit, might consider counseling. Traumatic events often reawaken a child's fear of loss of parents (frequently a child's greatest fear) at a time when parents may be preoccupied with their own practical and emotional difficulties.

Families may choose to permit temporary regressive behavior. Several arrangements may help children separate gradually after the agreed-upon time limit: spending extra time with parents immediately before bedtime, leaving the child's bedroom door slightly ajar, and using a nightlight.

Many parents have their own fears of leaving a child alone after a traumatic event or other fears they may be unable to acknowledge. Parents often are more able to seek help on the children's behalf and may, in fact, use the children's problems as a way of asking for help for themselves and other family members.

Teachers also can help children with art and play activities, as well as by encouraging group discussions in the classroom and informational presentations about the traumatic event.