

HELPING CHILDREN COPE

Children may be especially upset and exhibit exaggerated emotions following the disaster. These reactions are normal and usually will not last long.

LISTED BELOW ARE SOME PROBLEMS YOU MAY SEE IN YOUR CHILDREN:

- Excessive fear of darkness, separation, or being alone
- Clinging to parents, fear of strangers
- Worry
- Increase in immature behaviors
- Not wanting to go to school
- Changes in eating / sleeping behaviors
- Increase in aggressive behavior or shyness
- Bed wetting or thumb sucking
- Persistent nightmares
- Headaches or other physical complaints

SOME THINGS THAT WILL HELP YOUR CHILD ARE:

- Talk with your children about his/her feelings about the disaster. Share your feelings too!
- Talk about what happened, give your child information he / she can understand
- Reassure your child that you and they are safe and together. You may need to repeat this reassurance often.
- Hold and touch your child often
- Spend extra time with your child at bedtime
- Allow your child to mourn or grieve over the lost toy, a lost blanket, or a lost home.
- If you feel your child is having problems at school, talk to his / her teacher so you can work together to help your child.

Please reread this in the coming months. Usually a child's emotional response to a disaster will not last long. Some problems may surface many months afterward. Your community mental health center is staffed by counselors skilled in talking with people with people experiencing disaster related problems.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL YOUR LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH.