

Factsheet 6: How to support children and young people affected by trauma

It is normal for children and young people to experience strong emotions and exhibit challenging behaviours after experiencing or hearing about frightening events. Often, these reactions are misunderstood as the child or young person being 'difficult,' or 'naughty' and parents and carers may react with anger or frustration.

It is important to remember that children and young people are hard wired to search for safety in the adults and people around them. Our calm and attentive responses towards children and young people in distress can have a powerful effect on their sense of safety and recovery.

Tips for parents and carers supporting children and young people

- Understand that the child/young person's behaviour may be a sign of fear and the impact of trauma
- Acknowledge the child/young person's emotions. Show them you understand that their feelings are normal given what they have been through
- Listen to the child/young person's thoughts, worries and fears and encourage them to express their feelings
- Reassure the child/young person that they are safe and cared for
- Limit the child/young person's exposure to news or social media
- Do enjoyable activities together as a family (go on a picnic, explore a new location, cook together)
- Engage in activities with the child/young person that keep them connected to your culture
- Provide hugs and physical reassurance if this is wanted by the child/young person
- Provide opportunities for the child/young person to express themselves using art, play or movement





Remember:

Your wellbeing as a parent plays a big role in helping your child/young person recover from difficult experiences. Taking care of yourself is the first step in supporting their recovery.

If the child/young person's reactions are dangerous, ongoing or getting worse and you find it hard to cope, consider reaching out for more help. You can talk to specialist children and youth workers at QPASTT or speak with your GP.

To speak with QPASTT or find out more about our services, please call 07 3391 6677 or visit qpastt.org.au.

QPASTT is the Queensland Program of Assistance to Survivors of Torture and Trauma. It is a community organisation which provides a variety of flexible and culturally sensitive support services to people who have been tortured or who have suffered refugee-related trauma. QPASTT has offices across Queensland.