

## Helping Children in Crisis

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### Exposure

- As surviving victims
- As witnesses to violent or non-violent acts
- Being in relationship with a victim
- Listening to or viewing the details of the tragedy
- 5,000,000 children experience a traumatic event every year in the United States.
- Bruce Perry (Child Trauma Academy)

### Examples of a Crisis

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Being separated from loved ones
- Bullying
- Witnessing harm to a loved one
- Natural disasters
- Car accidents
- Unpredictable parent behavior
- Terrorism
- Unexplained violence

### Trauma Informed Care

*The more our stress-response system is activated in uncontrollable ways, the less able we are to handle even small amounts of stress. When you are overstressed, you no longer have efficient access to your higher brain functions. When you are in a high state of alarm, significant parts of your cortex- the highest functioning part of your brain- have shut down entirely. - Bruce Perry*

### The Brain's Response

Remember, experiences shape the brain.

What is the history of the child?

If you start from a healthy place, adversity can be character building.

If you grow up amid constant adversity, the ongoing stress can become toxic.

### The Big Questions

- What do I do?
- What do I say?
- How do I help the parents?
- Will the children be ok?
- Where is God?
- What do I do?
- What do I do?

### What Do I Do?

#### 1. Be prepared:

- "A faith that leaves us unprepared for suffering is a false faith that deserves to be lost" - Randy Alcorn
- "Wimpy worldviews make wimpy Christians. And wimpy Christians won't survive the days ahead." - John Piper

#### 2. Be proactive:

- Study appropriate developmental responses
- Develop plans for ministry

#### 3. Be present:

- Show up, do more listening than talking
- Example of Job

#### 4. Be practical:

- Provide tangible acts of service
- Be supportive of parents and caregivers

#### Remember....

- Children don't always have the words to express their true feelings...

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- You may discover inaccuracies about their experience through play and art
- Repetitive questions and statements are normal.

### Common Responses

- Short-term distress is almost universal
- Not all bad...adaptive responses
- Development of new fears
- Separation anxiety
- Regressive Behaviors
- Nightmares
- Sleep/Appetite Disturbances
- Decline in schoolwork
- Feelings of Isolation
- Anger
- Irritability
- Increased sensitivity to sensory stimuli

### Focal points for children

- Stay in the present
- Meet immediate needs
- Maintain structure/routine
- Expect age appropriate responses and behaviors
- Activate/mobilize support resources
- Provide opportunities for kids to do
- Bring questions and fears back to the present or past
- Normalize recovery as a long-term process

### What do I say?

*“The role of the Christian leader is, first of all, to lovingly care for the victims, not to publicly presume to fathom the unsearchable wisdom of the Most High” -Daniel Propson*

### The Example of Job: Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar

- Job’s friend’s first sat in the ashes with him... providing comfort not through their words, but by their presence. Job 2:11-13
- Job’s friends then become intent on explaining why Job is encountering trials, what he’s done wrong, how God works, and what Job needs to do. Job 16:2-3
- God speaks to Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar: Job 42:7-9
- God blesses Job: Job 42:12

Remember... “listening well” is equally important as “talking well”

- Be honest
- Be age appropriate
- Be brief
- Be patient

### How can I help the parents?

#### Strategies

1. Educate and empower parents
  - Normalize responses to parents
2. Encourage parents to seek help
3. Help parents recognize developmental factors
  - The role of media
  - The cognitive barriers
  - The egocentric perspective
  - Recovery as a long-term process

### Resources

[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)  
[www.thewarmplace.org](http://www.thewarmplace.org)  
[www.childtrauma.org](http://www.childtrauma.org)  
<http://www.acesconnection.com/>  
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/traumatic-experiences/>

### Presenter

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