

## DEALING WITH TRAGEDY

Tips and Resources for Parents

Excerpted from WNET New York

The following is a list of tip focused on helping children through difficult times.

### Tips for Parents

It is not easy talking to children about tragic events. We offer the following suggestions to help you help your children cope with the trauma inflicted by the recent tragedy:

- **Reassure children that they are safe.** Explain to them that there are good, competent people in charge who are working to keep us all safe.
- **Point out good deeds that have come out of this tragedy.** Focus on stories of heroism and generosity to help children fortify their belief in humanity.
- **Explain that feeling upset is normal.** Communicate to your children that being sad or crying about these events is ok.
- **Talk about the tragedy with children old enough to understand recent events.** Tell your children the truth, but make sure that your explanations are age-appropriate. Younger children will need brief information (only if they are aware of the tragedy and are asking questions) combined with reassurances of safety and love. Older children will be able to ask more involved questions and may need more detailed reassurances about why they are safe. Give children the answers to their questions and try to avoid speculation. Be a good listener and ask your children why they are asking the questions they are asking, to get to the root of their anxiety.
- **Try to keep your routine.** This fosters feelings of safety and stability.
- **Encourage young children to express their feelings through art.** This may help them express thoughts they are unable to articulate.
- **Stay calm.** Children take cues from your behavior. It is ok to show that you are upset, but avoid expressing strong feelings of anger, fear, or hopelessness.
- **Try to spend more time with your children.** Tell them that you love them and engage them with quiet, calming activities.
- **Limit exposure to the media.** Avoid "staying glued" to the television. Instead, watch for a brief time and then talk about what you are seeing.
- **Don't punish children for reverting to behaviors from an earlier age, e.g., bed-wetting.** Instead, encourage them to verbalize the feelings behind their actions. These behaviors will subside over time.

- **Be familiar with signs of trauma and monitor your child's behavior in the upcoming weeks.** Be in touch with teachers and caregivers to ask about your child's behavior.
- **Take care of yourself.** Your children take cues from your words and actions, and you will need to take care of your own needs in order to stay calm and strong for your children. Seek out community resources to find the support you need.