

For Parents: Helping Your Child Plan Activities



It Helps to Understand

When children experience overwhelming events, you might see their behavior change. They might become dramatic and loud (have tantrums, whine, and fight with siblings). Sometimes they become quieter (less active, less playful, or disinterested in things they used to love to do). They may spend more time by themselves. They may talk less or not want to be with you as much. When you ask them questions or ask them to do something, they may say very little or ignore you. When children are withdrawn in this way, try not to become frustrated or angry.

How to Help

- Be aware of how you're feeling. If you are upset or angry, try to relax before interacting with children, so you can be calm and supportive.
- Remind children of the connection between their behavior and their feelings. Help them understand how their actions are related to the feelings that come when they think about the disaster.
- Maintain the routines that your family had before the disaster. Children feel safest when there is order and predictability.

When Children Withdraw

- Encourage children to do their everyday activities. Keep to your family routines, eat meals together, attend school and after-school activities, and spend time with friends.
- Do not let your children spend too much time alone or being passive. This includes watching TV, hours alone in the bedroom, and over-sleeping.
- Encourage outdoor activities. If group activities are not available, taking a walk with your friends or siblings is a good alternative.
- Ask children to describe activities in school and outside of school. If your children are unable to report much about their own experiences, ask about their friends' activities.
- Encourage your children to talk about their negative feelings or thoughts. Help them to talk with you or other trusted adults about what is making them want to get away and be alone.