For Children: Getting Control of Your Fears

What You Should Know

When you go through a very scary event, you may feel afraid for days or weeks or even longer afterwards. You may have a hard time understanding that your upset feelings come from the really upsetting experience that you went through. It seems weird that what you're feeling right now could be because of the frightening event you went through days or weeks or months ago. But it can be, and it's pretty common.

What Can Help

- **Keep doing your everyday activities.** Eat meals with your family, go to school and after-school activities, and spend time with your friends, even if it is hard right now.

- **Try to spend more time with your parents, other adults, or friends.** Choose those who have helped you or made you feel better. Figure out when and how to reach out to them.

- **Tell your parents, or an adult you trust, that you are feeling afraid or worried.** Together you may figure out why you are feeling that way and how to manage those feelings.

- **Remember that people often feel afraid.** After a scary event, many people still feel afraid even when the danger is over.

- **Take a few slow, relaxing breaths.** To help your body calm down and stop panicking, practice slow breathing this way:

  1. Put your hand on your stomach when you breathe in and notice how it sticks out like a balloon filling up with air. Breathe in slowly as you count to three: one . . . two . . . three. Think about your favorite color and all the good things that are that color.

  2. When you breathe out, feel your stomach shrinking back in, like when a balloon loses air. Breathe out slowly as you count to five: one . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five. Think about the color gray and all the upsetting feelings leaving your body.

  3. Do this a few more times. You can also practice breathing slowly by blowing bubbles.