Traumatic events, such as school shootings, can cause children to feel frightened and unsure. Traumas at school can even cause children to show challenging behaviors. These incidents can affect school performance. Here are some ways you can help children cope.

Teach Them Self-care

Children learn by watching what the adults around them do. Make time to care for yourself and encourage them to participate in activities they enjoy.

- Encourage periodic physical play and activities to use anxious energy.
- Teach them relaxation exercises, and practice together before nap time.
- Have them write about or draw a picture about someone they can talk to.
- Encourage healthy eating habits.
- Help them get regular, moderate exercise.
- Plan fun class activities for rainy days that could trigger fears.
- Reduce exposure to news and aggressive or violent stories.
- Spend individual quiet time with students where possible.

LSU Health Sciences Center
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Terrorism and Disaster Coalition for Child and Family Resilience

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Helping Children Cope With Trauma At School

Traumatic events, such as school shootings, can cause children to feel frightened and unsure. Traumas at school can even cause children to show challenging behaviors. These incidents can affect school performance. Here are some ways you can help children cope.
Common Reactions in Children After A Traumatic Event

Some Reactions include being:
- Easily distracted
- Ming wandering or “zoning out”
- Inability to concentrate on tasks
- Angry outbursts
- New Aggression or irritability
- Highly reactive to some sounds (such as thunder, sirens, etc.)
- Preoccupation with safety
- Increase in physical complaints (stomach aches, headaches)
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite
- New social withdrawal
- Lack of interest in usual activities

How You Can Help Young Children

Those reactions are temporary responses to a traumatic event. Children can get better with help and support:

- Understand that feelings such as worry, irritability, or moodiness may be expressed by “acting out” or withdrawn behaviors.
- Help them find words for their feelings. Be sure to listen to them.
- Tell children that it’s ok to have these feelings, but set clear, realistic limits on aggressive or destructive behaviors.
- Help them think of ok ways to let these feelings out (e.g., tearing up paper, etc.)
- Help them build their concentration with brief tasks to complete, building up to longer, more complex tasks.
- Acknowledge that losses they may have experienced, and any new changes or losses they face.

Special Concerns of Teens

Peers are especially important to teens. Traumatic events involving classmates can be deeply affecting. Teens may “act out” or “withdraw” at this time. You can help them by:

- Be available to listen to them
- Letting them know you understand how hard these events have been for them.
- If it is possible, provide safe environments for socializing.
- Encourage them to reach out to old friends and to make new friends, but understand if this is hard for them.
