

TRAUMA AND YOUR FAMILY

JUNE 2015 RESOURCE SHARING

What is Trauma?

A trauma is a scary, dangerous, or violent event that can happen to any or all members of a family. A fundamental goal of parenting is to help children grow and thrive to the best of their potential. Parents anticipate protecting their children from danger whenever possible, but sometimes serious danger threatens, whether it is manmade, such as a school shooting or domestic violence, or natural, such as a flood or earthquake. And when a danger is life-threatening or poses a threat of serious injury, it becomes a potentially traumatic event for children.

Some types of trauma that families go through are:

- Accidents or injuries
- Serious illness
- House fires
- Crimes
- Community violence
- School violence
- Sudden loss of a loved one
- Combat injuries or death of a family member
- Violence within the family
- Abuse
- Neglect
- Homelessness
- Natural disasters
- Acts of terrorism
- Living in or escaping from a war zone

Things Families Can Do To Cope With Traumatic Stress

It is natural to want to “put the past behind you” and to not think or talk about the bad things that happened. While each person in the family may behave differently, families can manage fear and stress and feel safer when they spend time together talking about their feelings, return to everyday routines, respect family rules, and honor family traditions.

Some families get better with time and the support of others, while other families may need help from trauma treatments. When seeking help, your family can:

- Talk to a doctor, school counselor, or spiritual leader about the family’s trauma event
- Find a mental health provider who has helped families overcome traumatic stress
- Look for trauma treatments that help all members of the family:
 - Feel safe
 - Learn about trauma and its effects
 - Cope with difficulties caused by the trauma
 - Recognize and build on the family’s strengths
 - Talk about ways to get the family back on track

Go to nctsn.org to learn more about how to help your family grow stronger.