

CIRT Support Leaflet for Parents and Carers

When a Critical Incident Happens. What Parents and Carers can do to help their Children and Young People.

Everyone's experience of a critical incident can differ. This leaflet may help you as a parent/carers to understand your child's reaction in similar situations.

It will also show you how you can help normal healing to happen. This will take time.

Normal feelings and emotions in response to traumatic events may include: shock, denial, sadness, crying, anger, fear, guilt, despair and anxiety or appearing not to be feeling anything at all.

Your child may also feel tired, lack concentration, be unable to sleep or eat and may experience other physical symptoms, such as nausea, headaches, feeling cold and/or loss of appetite.

The event may trigger memories of other losses in your child's life. Your child may display avoidance behaviour by keeping busy or appearing reluctant to talk about what has happened.

With the understanding and support of loved ones, these reactions usually pass more quickly. However, it is important to accept that things just can't be made better in a short space of time.

Things you can do to help!

- Listen to your child
- Be aware of short term mood swings
- Talk to your child using words and language he/she will understand
- Answer any questions honestly and simply, and remember it is okay to say, "I don't know."

Other things that may help your child!

Encourage them to:

- Try a relaxing activity such as deep breathing
- Take some exercise
- Listen to music
- Take part in an activity with friends/family

- Identity who can support them, e.g. friends, family, school, community
- Talk to someone you trust
- Contact other support services (see link under 'When to seek further help')

Here is a link to a super simple breathing technique called [Starfish Breathing or 5 Finger Breathing](#). Why not try this with your child!

Let us remember: “Behind every young child who believes in themselves is a parent/carer who believed first!”

Quote by Matthew Jacobson

When to seek further help

Children respond differently when a critical incident happens. Many parents worry about their children and they sometimes feel they should seek professional help immediately after a death or event.

Intervening too early may disrupt these normal coping skills but sometimes specialised help is necessary. If, after 4—6 weeks, your child is experiencing any of the difficulties described, do seek further help.

Your child's school will provide information on what other help is available or you may wish to arrange an appointment with your child's GP in the first instance.

Here are some signs which might mean your child may need additional help or support:

- They cannot handle the intensity of their feelings and reactions
- Their normal ways of coping are not working for them
- Moving on with life is taking longer than you would expect
- There is no one they can talk to about how they are feeling

If you or someone you know is in need of immediate help or support, please contact:

Lifeline 0808 808 8000

For further helpline support, follow the link to: [Lifeline Helpline and Links to Other Organisations](#)