



## TIPS FOR PARENTS TO HELP THEMSELVES AFTER A DISASTER

When a disaster or other type of tragedy occurs, parents are often concerned with how to best help their child while they are simultaneously trying to cope.

Children and adults alike often become scared and confused. Like adults, children are most likely to be worried about their family and significant people in their lives. The following tips may guide parents to help themselves and their child cope after a traumatic event:

**Allow yourself time to heal.** Parents are often so focused on taking care of their families that they do not take the time to take care of themselves. Allow yourself time and space to express your feelings about what happened. Be patient with your emotional state, as it is normal after a trauma to experience mood fluctuations.

**Ask for support.** Spend time talking with other adults who will understand what you are going through. While it is always a good idea to seek support from loved ones, remember that those in your typical support system may be compromised if they experienced the same event. If this is the case, you may want to find out about local support groups.

**Engage in healthy behaviors such as eating nutritious meals and getting enough rest.** Those who are able to maintain healthy behaviors tend to feel more in control of their lives and are more able to cope effectively. Avoid the use of drugs and alcohol.

**Maintain regular routines regarding eating, sleeping and exercising.** Keeping to routines is helpful for both parents and children in getting the family back to normal life after a traumatic event.

**Avoid making major life decisions.** While it may be tempting to move or to change jobs after a traumatic event, it is usually best to avoid making major life decisions during times of stress and turmoil.

**If you are having difficulty functioning or are unable to perform daily tasks, consult with your doctor or mental health professional.** Remember that you will be of no help to your family if you are having difficulty helping yourself.

Source: New York University Child Study Center, "Caring for Kids After Trauma, Disaster and Death: A Guide For Parents and Professionals." Used with permission.