

SOME COPING STRATEGIES FOR YOUTH

- A. Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships. Love and care in the family is a primary need. Extra time should be spent with children to let them know that someone will take care of them and, if parents are survivors, that their parents have reassumed their former role as protector and nurturer is important. Physical closeness is needed.
- B. It is important to talk about the tragedy---to address the irrationality and suddenness of disaster (or the event). Children need to be allowed to ventilate their feelings, as do adults, and they have a similar need to have those feelings validated. Reenactments and play about the catastrophe should be encouraged. It may be useful to provide them with special time to paint, draw, or write about the event. Adults or older children may help pre-school children reenact the event since pre-school children may not be able to imagine alternative "endings" to the traumatic event and hence may feel particularly helpless.
- C. Parents should be prepared to tolerate regressive behaviors and accept the manifestation of aggression and anger especially in the early phases after the tragedy.
- D. Parents should be prepared for children to talk sporadically about the event--spending small segments of time concentrating on particular aspects of the tragedy.
- E. ***Children want as much factual information as possible and should be allowed to discuss their own theories about what happened in order for them to begin to master the trauma or to reassert control over their environment.***
- F. Since children are often reluctant to initiate conversations about trauma, it may be helpful to ask them what they think other children felt or thought about the event.
- G. Reaffirming the future and talking in "hopeful" terms about future events can help a child rebuild trust and faith in his own future and the world. Often parent's despair interferes with a child's ability to recover.
- H. Issues of death should be addressed concretely.

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