

HOW CHILDREN RESPOND

Children look to the adults in their lives to make sense of the world and how to respond, especially during upsetting and traumatic community events.

Even children as young as 2 and 3 pick up on family, social and community stress. Kids are very good at noticing emotional changes in their caregivers, but do not know how to make sense of what is happening on their own. Talking with and supporting your child can help them cope better during this time.

POSITIVE WAYS TO EXPRESS EMOTIONS:

PLAY OR LISTEN TO
MUSIC



CREATE ART SUCH AS
DRAWING, COLLAGE OR
PAINTING



WRITE OR JOURNAL,
WRITE LETTERS TO
LEADERS



VOLUNTEER OR
PARTICIPATE IN
COMMUNITY SERVICE



PARTICIPATE IN
RAISING AWARENESS OF
IMPORTANT ISSUES



*Opening
Doors
to Bright
Futures
for Kids*

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SUPPORTING KIDS
during and after upsetting
community events.

ReadyKids

CHARLOTTESVILLE, A YEAR LATER

The events of August 2017 were deeply upsetting within our community. While we do not know what the anniversary of these events will hold, we can expect that August 11-12 and the days afterwards may bring up difficult thoughts, emotions, and behaviors both in adults and children.

POSSIBLE WAYS YOUTH MAY BE IMPACTED:

- **MEDIA EXPOSURE TO THE EVENTS OF LAST YEAR** - Children are impacted by what they see, particularly when seeing familiar places as the setting for violence and offensive symbols.
- **ANNIVERSARY REACTIONS** - Reactions on the anniversary of traumatic experiences are common.
- **POSSIBLE COMMUNITY VIOLENCE** - The community is preparing for potential violence during anniversary events.
- **REAWAKENED COMMUNITY DIVISION** - Hateful actions and words toward minority groups can impact children of all ages.

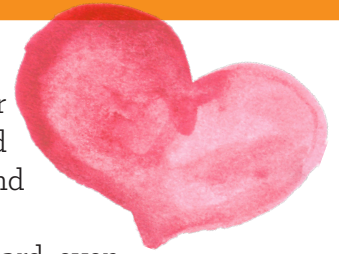
SIGNS OF STRESS AND ANXIETY:

- **FEARFULNESS** - clingy, fearful and difficulty separating from caregivers
- **SOMATIC COMPLAINTS** - headaches, stomachaches, or tiredness
- **SLEEP DIFFICULTIES** - nightmares, trouble falling asleep, bedwetting, or not wanting to sleep in own bed
- **REGRESSION** - acting younger than their age
- **CHANGES IN PLAY AND ACTIVITIES** - young children may act out fears or what they have seen in their play. In older youth, changes in interest in activities or social connections is a sign of anxiety.
- **TRAUMA HISTORY** - youth with a past trauma or exposure to violence, mental health concerns, or special needs may be more vulnerable to the impact of these events.



TIPS FOR SUPPORTING KIDS

- **SET ASIDE TIME TO TALK** - Find a time when you are calm and not distracted to talk with your child about what is going on. Tell the truth, avoid graphic details, use age-appropriate language, and speak in simple, clear ways.
- **FOCUS ON LISTENING** - Children need to be heard, even when you do not have all of the answers. Ask about their thoughts and feelings, and focus on responding to their questions or concerns.
- **MODEL POSITIVE COPING** - Monitor your own stress level so that you can be calm and in control around your child. Find healthy ways to cope and express your own emotions when your child is not nearby. If your child wants to talk when you are upset, schedule a later time to follow up when you are ready.
- **LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE** - Minimize or restrict TV and social media exposure of graphic and violent content as much as possible. Talk with your child about what they see, including how older youth engage in social media.
- **PLAN POSITIVE ACTIVITIES** - In difficult times, kids especially need to feel connected and to engage in comforting activities.
- **REASSURE SAFETY** - Emphasize ways that adults are keeping them safe, including helpers in the community, without making unrealistic promises.
- **MAINTAIN NORMAL ROUTINES AND RULES** - Consistency and structure provides stability and comfort for kids. Talk with your child ahead of time about any changes in their schedule.
- **POSITIVE EXPRESSION OF VALUES AND EMOTIONS** - Difficult times can provide rich opportunities for sharing your values with your kids. Older youth may benefit from helping activities that allow them to express their values. See back of this pamphlet for healthy ways to express emotions.



If your child's behavioral and emotional changes do not begin to improve after a few weeks, you may want to talk with a professional such as a Pediatrician, School Counselor, Spiritual Leader or Therapist.