



# WHEN SOMETHING TERRIBLE HAPPENS

Dealing with children (under 12 years)



**After a terrible event, children may have different kinds of ideas or feelings. There is no right or wrong way to feel. For example, your child may:**

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- Be fearful e.g., become startled easily, want to stay at home
- Be angry e.g., fighting, hitting
- Be sad e.g., wanting to be alone
- Behave like a younger child
- Have trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Have difficulty with concentration
- Complain of body aches and pains
- Describe images of traumatic event coming into head.
- Repeated drawing or play about events that occurred during the trauma

***All children react differently. Some will exhibit behavior change immediately and others not until a few weeks later. Most will recover in a few weeks.***

**What should parents do?**

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- Spend more time with your children and talk to them.
- **Listen** to their fears and concerns. Let them explain their feeling without interruption.
- Children find comfort in saying Dua or praying together as a family.
- Be honest and share age appropriate information with children.
- Involve them in family routine and exercise. Get their help in doing tasks.
- Understand their reactions and do not scold. Stay calm during their anger outbursts.
- Make them feel safe. Tell them their safety is your priority.
- Try and keep routines as normal as possible as this helps them feel more secure (meal time, exercise, sleep time, attending school).
- Involve them in small activities to support or honor the victims. (writing a card or a story, etc.)
- Limit TV viewing, especially the news.
- Be aware of your response to the trauma and take care of yourself.

## How to talk to your child

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- Start discussing the topic but don't force them to talk.
- Young children can communicate by playing or drawing.
- Listen and let them express their feelings.
- Discuss your feelings and help them find words for their feelings.
- Reassure them that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who do bad things.
- Do not lie to your child. Acknowledge that bad things happen, but talk about how people are working hard to make them safe.
- Try to focus the child's attention to the good deeds being done following the event.

## When to seek help for your child?

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- When above problems continue for 2 or more months after the traumatic event.
- When they have persistent worries about their own and other's safety.
- When they consistently refuse to go to school.
- When there is reduced interest in peers.
- When there is change in their school performance.





Pakistan Zindabad

**This brochure has been prepared by senior mental health professionals  
and is free for printing and distributing anywhere in the country.**

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