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:

- 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?

- 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

- 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?

- 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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