

Helping Your Child Deal with a Crisis

What is a crisis?

A crisis is an event that may cause stress or trauma. Children have many responses to a crisis. These include physical, emotional and social responses. You may find your child is feeling things that they have never felt before. These feelings are very normal. Your family, co-workers and friends may have feelings that are different from yours when a crisis happens. This is also common.



What should I watch for?

When a crisis happens, your child might talk about it. They may have heard about it on the radio, TV or from others talking about it. Your child may have been involved in the crisis.

If your child is having a hard time dealing with a crisis they may:

- Cry.
- Have nightmares.
- Have physical problems. This may include headaches, nausea, restlessness or tremors.
- Have a change in appetite.
- Have a hard time concentrating or remembering things.
- Withdraw or want to be alone.
- Not enjoy normal activities.
- Act out or have angry outbursts for little or no reason.
- Feel anxious or frightened.
- Have trouble sleeping.
- Feel very tired.

How can I help my child?

- Talk with your child in a calm and caring way.
- Spend extra time with your child.
- Be truthful as you help your child understand what happened.
- Give your child plenty of time to ask questions. If children don't get answers, they will fill in any gaps with their imagination.
- Have your child express feelings through art, music, or play. This may work if it is hard for your child to talk about the crisis.

Your child's past experience and age will affect their reaction. If your child is having trouble with school, eating, playing or sleeping, call a mental health professional for help.

Where else can I get help?

Call the Children's Hospital of Wisconsin (CHW) Trauma Program at 414-266-3064.
Call the (CHW) Daniel M Soref Family Resource Center at 414-266-6333.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.