

TRAUMA INTERVENTION PROGRAMS (TIP) SAN DIEGO

TIPS FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN CRISIS

Very often children are the forgotten victims of trauma as parents are busy putting their lives back to together...

- Keep children informed and explain, age appropriately, what has happened. Use words like 'death' or 'dead' because phrases like 'went to sleep', or 'passed away' can cause confusion or even fright.
- Encourage them to ask questions and always answer them honestly. Children usually know when something is being sugar-coated and this increases their anxiety.
- Include children in discussions about family's loss. Let them know that other members of the family are going to be upset and may cry.
- Whatever you and your children are feeling, acknowledge it. Children pick up on unspoken tensions and may assume that your tension has something to do with them.
- Make sure that they understand that **nothing** they did, or didn't do, caused the family member or friend to die.
- Allow children to grieve in their own way. Let them know that everyone reacts in their own way, and that it's okay.
- Explain that if they get sick, it doesn't mean that they are going to die too.
- It's okay, and may be beneficial, for children to stay at home with family for a few days. However, have them continue with school and outside activities as soon as they are ready.
- Recognize that a child, who has lost a parent or someone close, may be overly protective and fearful that another significant person is going to die or leave them somehow.
- Be aware that there may be physical manifestations of grief, such as headache or upset stomach.
- Some children will work out their feelings of grief through play. It may not appear to an adult that the child is mourning or taking the situation seriously. Children may grieve in short spurts of time, then run off and play.
- Review family safety procedures so that children will feel prepared the next time an emergency situation occurs.
- Talk with teachers and others who may be with the child, so they understand how he/she has been affected.
- Spend extra time with your child, especially doing something fun or relaxing for both of you.
- Remember that a hug can reassure children that they are loved. Let them know that they are safe and loved.

Most significant to a child's ability to cope is the ability of the significant adults around them to cope...