

Common Reactions and How to Help

Age Group	Reactions	How to Help
Infants to 2 years old	Infants may become crankier. They may cry more than usual or want to be held and cuddled more.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase positive interactions throughout the day ● Respond to emotions in a caring and supportive manner
Age 3 to 6 years old	Preschool and kindergarten children may return to behaviors they have outgrown. For example, toileting accidents, bed-wetting, or being frightened about being separated from their parents/caregivers. They may also have tantrums or a hard time sleeping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be patient and tolerant ● Provide reassurance (verbal and physical) ● Encourage expression through play, reenactment, story-telling ● Allow short-term changes in sleep arrangements ● Plan calming, comforting activities before bedtime ● Maintain routines ● Avoid media exposure
Ages 7 to 10 years old	Older children may feel sad, mad, or afraid that the event will happen again. Peers may share false information; however, parents or caregivers can correct the misinformation. Older children may focus on details of the event and want to talk about it all the time or not want to talk about it at all. They may have trouble concentrating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be patient and tolerant ● Arrange to stay in touch with friends through telephone and internet (virtual playdates) ● Regular exercise and stretching ● Engage in educational activities ● Participate in structured household chores ● Set gentle but firm limits ● Discuss the current outbreak and encourage questions. Include what is being done in the family and community to assist. ● Encourage expression through play and conversation. ● Help family create ideas for routines ● Limit media exposure ● Clarify misinformation

Other Key Considerations for Caregivers:

1. Behavior is a form of communication. Pay attention to behaviors at home and at school.
2. Model healthy coping behavior.
3. Normalize routines as soon as possible.
4. Listen to children and validate their feelings.
5. Encourage activities that help them express their feelings: games, art-related activities.
6. Identify community supports that can assist families during this time.

References:

Center for Disease Control, [Caring for Children](#)

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network: [Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

American Academy of Pediatrics: [The Emotional Impact of Disaster on Children and Families](#)