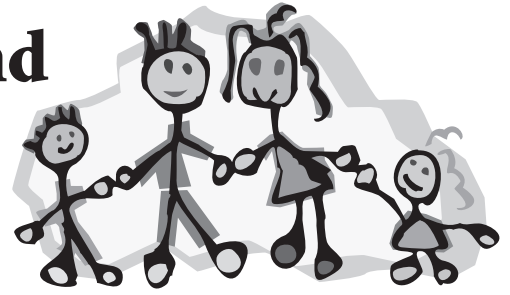


Developmental Needs Around Exposure to Violence

Parents are the first line of defense for children who have been exposed to violence.



A Day In the Life of American Children

- 9 children
are murdered
 - 30 children
are wounded by guns
 - 3 children
die from child abuse
 - 27 children
die from poverty
 - 2,350 children
are in adult jails
 - 307 children
are arrested for crimes of violence
 - 5,703 teenagers
are victims of violent crime
 - 2,355 teenagers
drop out of school
 - 2,868 babies
are born into poverty
- Children's Defense Fund, 1995*

Stage One – Numbing

Symptoms

- Shock
- Sorrow
- Anger & Guilt
- Automatic handling of routine

Needs

- Allow child to be dependent on others.
- Avoid dwelling on the gory details that children may not understand.
- Expect night terrors.
- A child may need others to take care of daily tasks. Communicate to the child “It’s not your fault.” This message is especially critical in domestic violence.
- Permit child to be self-pitying, remote.
- Let the child ask endless questions. Your answers can be supportive even though you cannot always be reassuring.
- Do not chide, scoff, belittle, or joke about the child’s feelings.
- Ask direct questions like “Are you thinking of hurting someone?”

- Allow opportunities for release of anger as well as anxiety. Respect times for crying, wailing, praying, silence.
- Specify certain times to attend to tasks at home, school, or elsewhere.
- Ease up on academic expectations for older children.

Stage Two – Disorganization

Symptoms

- Need to talk about the deceased at length.
- Acute loneliness
- Disorganization, irrational thoughts
- Deep depression, aimlessness, apathy, extreme fatigue, anxiety, anger, tightness in throat, loss of sleep, clinging to deceased’s possessions

Needs

- Intimacy with friends, children and family.
- Help children sort out their values; make it important to fill each day with as much love as they can hold.
- Allow child to be distracted.
- Allow child to express feelings

Stage Three - Re-Organization

Symptoms

- Feelings less intense
- Acute loneliness
- Appetite improves
- New interests, energy, less anxious, accepting loss

Needs

- Encourage child to increase activities, play and work.
- Encourage child to play with friends and make new friends.
- Acknowledge the growth that results from grief.

*Based on a publication by the New Orleans Violence and Children Intervention Project
Source: US Department of Health & Human Services*