

# SUPPORTING OUR CHILDREN: RESILIENCE IN A TIME OF CRISIS

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# Stress Reactions

- Stress is interpreted differently by each individual;
- The stress response is normal;
- Should not assume that trauma will result.

# School Response to Events in Ferguson

- Most children (as many as 70%) will be fine relying on family and community support.
- A small percentage of children will need trauma focused mental health services.
- The goal is to assist you to meet the needs of those who will have the normal stress response and spot and direct others to appropriate sources of support.

# Key Point

You can assist the young people in your schools!

- Our goal is to provide you with the basic information and resources to respond.
- There are five values that we will focus on:
  - Safety
  - Trustworthiness
  - Control (predictability)
  - Support and collaboration
  - Empowerment

# Take Your Cues From the Children

- Every child will respond differently;
- Answer the questions asked;
- Validate feelings;
- Let youth know that you have heard them, get what they are saying;
- You are good at what you do this is the time to do it!

# Model Calm

- You are one of their strongest role models; what you say and how you say it matters.
- We all learn that bad things happen;
- Even though our lives are upset, we can work together & grow stronger.
- Resilience is the result of learning to take control of our emotions and behaviors and responding to adversity.

# Be Reassuring

- It is important for students of all ages to understand that these events are unusual; they do not happen everyday.
- If safety concerns are expressed, ask students what might make the school feel like a safe place for them.
- Think of the toddler who falls on the play ground.
- Allowing them to rely on their internal and external resources without excessive involvement and apprehension is empowering.

# Help Them with Self-Expression

- Provide time for them to pull together their thoughts and feelings;
- Allow time for them to ask questions; normalize and validate their thoughts and feelings.
- Consult with student leaders, determine what they recommend; allow students to be a part of the solution.
- When they signal that they have said or expressed what they need to, return to routine.

# Developmentally Appropriate

- Don't volunteer too much information to younger children;
- Don't talk down to or oversimplify things for adolescents.
- Don't be afraid to say that you don't know.
- Understand that you may be asked to return to topics and students need to comment, share or discuss in order to come to terms with things that have happened.

# Key Points

It is important to remain neutral;

You do not want to appear judgmental or biased in any direction.

Important to allow students to process.

If pressed, indicate that the focus is on the students. You can always state that you do not know.

# Stressed Out

- The events of the last two weeks have been stressful. Adults and children alike will show signs of that stress.
- There are signs that the stress goes beyond their natural ability to cope. Look for:
  - Fears,
  - Arousal,
  - Preoccupations with death, safety, what is going on
  - Looking watching for danger,
  - Changes in sleep, appetite
  - Irritability, anger, worry
  - Difficulty focusing on school work, projects, conversations

# Factors Influencing Stress Reactions

- Youth who are related to the Brown family and family friends.
- Children who lived in or nearby the location of the death of Michael Brown and/or live near the sight of protests.
- Youth have participated in protests;
- Children who know children who live nearby.
- Youth who know youth who live nearby.

# Age Matters

- Pre-School Responses
  - Regresses developmentally, i.e., thumb sucking or bed wetting
  - Exaggerated startle response
  - Fears of darkness or animals
  - Clinging to parents
  - Nightmares and terrors
  - Loss of bladder control, constipation
  - Speech difficulties (e.g., stammering)
  - Loss or increase in appetite

# Age Matters

## Early Childhood Responses

- Irritability, whining
- Clinging, separation anxieties
- Aggressive behavior at home or school
- Competition with siblings for attention from parents
- Nightmares and terrors
- Fear of darkness
- School avoidance
- Withdrawal from peers
- Loss of interest and poor concentration in school

# Age Matters

## Pre-Adolescents

- Sleep & appetite disturbance
  - Rebellious; refusal to do chores
  - School problems such as: withdrawal, fighting, loss of interest, attention seeking behavior
  - Physical problems such as headaches, vague aches and pain, skin eruptions, bowel problems, psychosomatic complaints
  - Loss of interest in social activities with peers
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- Adolescents
    - Menstrual changes for females
    - Apathy
    - Declines in power struggles with parents
    - Guilt feelings related to actions taken or not taken; changes in plans.

# Parents

- Parents may also be stressed and some may experience trauma.
  - This may make it more difficult to engage parents in school activities.
- Be prepared to provide resources to address:
  - Physical/material needs.
    - Information to
    - School supplies and uniforms
    - Food
    - Household supplies
  - Social and emotional responses
    - Information to assist students to cope
    - Resources to assist the parent to cope

# School Personnel

- You are a part of the community and have responses and reactions to the stressors of the last two weeks as well.
- Be careful to engage in self-care; re-establish your routine.
- Share insights and concerns within your teams; problem solve together;
- Seek support from family, friends, faith community
- Don't be afraid to seek help for yourself; seeking assistance is a strength.

# Resources

- To learn more:  
National Child Traumatic Services Network: [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)
- Trauma Related Trainings:  
[www.moacts.org](http://www.moacts.org)  
DMH-Trauma-Informed Initiatives  
-free trainings & consultations
- Trauma Trained Clinicians:  
[www.moacts.org](http://www.moacts.org)  
<http://www.keepingkidsfirst.org/FundedAgencies>  
<http://www.stlmhb.com/community-investments/who-we-fund/childrens-services-fund/>