



Advice for Preschool Teachers /Child Care Staff if something difficult happens / if children are frightened

- Parents/teachers/child care staff are advised to behave normally where at all possible in front of children. Children are naturally resilient and if they see adults behaving normally they will feel reassured.
- The way adults - parent/teachers/siblings/child care staff behave (eg show upset, worry) will have an impact. Children will see this behaviour and may be affected particularly if they are sensitive or have experienced previous loss or trauma.
- Staff should model calmness, keeping routine normal whenever something challenging or frightening happens
- Reassure children who may be worried tell them that sometimes bad things happen but that they are safe
- Answer questions from children honestly and in a way that is appropriate to their age
- Do not give children information that they do not already have. Stick to facts - A person has died. This is very sad. You are safe
- Do not give children information that may frighten them or cause them to feel unsafe
- Distract children if they seem upset by doing pleasant activities: singing, watching a video, drawing, playing games or other activities they enjoy
- If parents phone in/ express concern, tell them you have followed the advice of outside agencies including guards as appropriate and that the children are safe.
- Be very careful about having conversations with other adults in front of children. Advise parents not to talk about any difficult event in front of children. Parents should ask other members of the family etc not to talk in front of children also
- If there are children who have been directly affected by an event monitor them over the days and weeks following the event and if anything changes in their behaviour ask to speak with parents and discuss concerns. An experienced staff member should communicate with parents in regard to any concerns ie observation of change in behaviour etc

WAYS TO HELP YOUR CHILD THROUGH THIS DIFFICULT TIME

Handout for parents: R12 (taken from Responding to Critical Incidents Resource Materials which is available on www.education.gov.ie)

Children will deal with difficulties naturally and in healthy ways if we allow them and if we provide a safe atmosphere, permission and example to do so.

- Listen carefully. Let them tell their story. Tell them that the reactions they are having are normal
- Pay extra attention, spend extra time with them, be more nurturing and comforting.
- Reassure them that they are safe
- Don't tell them that they are "lucky it wasn't worse". People are not consoled by such statements. Instead, tell them that you are sorry such an event has occurred and you want to understand and help them
- Do not be surprised by changes in behaviour or personality. They will return to their usual selves in time
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally. Help them to understand the relationship between anger and trauma. Help them find safe ways to express their feelings e.g. by drawing, exercise, or talking
- Help them to understand that defiance, aggression and risk behaviour is a way to avoid feeling the pain, hurt and or fear they are feeling
- When going out, let them know where you are going and when you will be back.
- If you are out for a long time telephone and reassure them
- Tolerate regressive behaviour such as nail biting, thumb sucking, or the need for a night light
- Share your own experience of being frightened of something and getting through it
- If they are feeling guilt or shame, emphasise that they did not choose for this to happen and that they are not to blame. Even if they were angry with the person who died, or had been mean to them, this did not make it happen
- Work with the school support services and other available services.
- As well as advising your child about appropriate use of social media, monitor their use particularly during this vulnerable time. Useful website: www.webwise.ie