



**IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:**

- Communication is the key. Encourage children to talk about how they feel. Ask questions and listen closely to what they say.
- Be reassuring. Let children know that their feelings, expressed in nightmares, guilt, shame, fear, sadness and anger, are normal responses to traumatic events.
- Let children try new activities that help them relax. New games or sports. Encourage older children to engage in activities they're good at and that make them feel capable. Remind them about difficult situations they've handled well.
- Getting together with friends and family is very important. Encourage children to talk with adult friends and relatives who have coped with past losses or disasters.
- If you're concerned about a child's reactions, act quickly.



**1-800-LIFENET**

1-800-543-3638

*We're here to help.  
24 hours a day • 7 days a week*



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*In English: 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638)  
In Spanish: 1-877-AYUDESE (1-877-298-3373)  
In Chinese: ASIAN LIFENET (1-877-990-8585)*

*For other languages, call 1-800-LIFENET and ask for a translator.*

[www.800lifenet.com](http://www.800lifenet.com)

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This campaign is a collaboration between the Mental Health Association of New York City, Inc., New York City Departments of Health and Mental Hygiene, and the September 11 Children's Fund

Artwork courtesy of Studio in a School, a non-profit organization: [studioinaschool.org](http://studioinaschool.org)

**\*  
IF WE STILL  
CAN'T  
MAKE SENSE  
OF 9-11,  
IMAGINE  
HOW KIDS  
FEEL.  
\***

# It was an emotional time. For some kids, it still is.

*Children react differently to stressful events than adults. Their response is often delayed and may be hard to detect. They find it hard to talk about how they've been affected by 9/11 and everything that's happened.*

## HOW CAN WE TELL IF SOMETHING IS WRONG?

First, look for changes in behavior, like extra clinging or a change in appetite. And don't wait for them to come to you. Ask questions like: How are they getting along with others? Are they having trouble sleeping? Is homework harder to do? Are they feeling less safe than before? These kinds of questions give kids a chance to talk about what's on their mind and feel supported.

## SOME CHILDREN ARE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER 11th:

- Children who witnessed the attacks firsthand or whose parent, relative or friend was killed or injured
- Children who were displaced from their homes or their schools
- Children who have a past history of emotional problems
- Children who have a past history of trauma, either as a victim or a witness to violence or abuse
- Children with an adult in their life who is having difficulty coping with the disaster themselves



## WON'T MY CHILD LET ME KNOW IF THERE'S A PROBLEM?

Sometimes, but not always with words. Following difficult events, some children have changes in behavior, mood or personality. Reactions vary by age.

Parents, teachers and other caring adults who know the child are in the best position to notice these changes. If a child exhibits any of the following reactions for two weeks or more, it could be a sign that he or she needs extra help.



## CHILDREN AGED 5 AND YOUNGER MAY:

- Have fears of being separated from a parent
- Be unusually fearful, "fussy," clingy, and have crying bouts
- Return to outgrown behavior, such as bed-wetting or baby talk
- Have nightmares or problems sleeping
- Have frequent stomachaches, headaches or other physical complaints
- Startle easily
- Avoid anything that reminds them of the attack
- Have a loss of or increase in appetite

## CHILDREN AGED 6 TO 11 MAY:

- Engage in repeated play that depicts the disturbing events over and over
- Have nightmares or problems sleeping
- Have unusual outbursts of anger
- Avoid going to school or withdraw from friends and family
- Be fearful, anxious or preoccupied with safety and danger
- Return to behavior they've outgrown
- Express feelings of guilt, such as "It was my fault" or "It was because of something I did"
- Have frequent stomachaches, headaches and other physical complaints
- Have problems concentrating in school or focusing on their homework
- Experience persistent, disturbing feelings and memories when reminded of the event

## WHAT CAN PARENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER CARING ADULTS DO TO HELP?

*Children under age 5:*

- Keep to normal routines and favorite rituals as much as possible
- Limit their exposure to TV programs and adult conversations about the events
- Tell them that you and they will be okay and ask what makes them feel better
- Give plenty of hugs and physical reassurance, especially at bedtime
- Set aside quiet times when you can listen and talk to them
- Provide opportunities for them to be creative and find other ways to express themselves

*Elementary School-Age Children, the above applies, plus:*

- Don't be afraid to ask them directly what's on their minds and answer their questions honestly
- Be sure to talk to them about the news and any adult conversations they've heard that they're concerned about
- Make sure they have opportunities to talk and play with peers, to be part of the normal, joyful activities of being a child
- Ask them what helps them feel safe
- Engage with your child in community volunteer efforts, like cleaning up the neighborhood or helping the elderly

## MOST IMPORTANT, GET HELP IF YOU NEED IT. IT'S FREE.

Free, specialized treatment and support services for children and families are available, and they work. It's important that you take action if your child needs help—and it's important that you take care of your own needs, too. Research clearly shows that children are better able to cope with disaster and trauma when their parents and other important adults in their life are coping well.

## HOW DO I GET HELP FOR MY CHILD, A FAMILY MEMBER OR MYSELF?

All LifeNet, counseling professionals provide free, confidential information and referral services, 24 hours a day. We always have the latest information and where to go for help. Anyone can call. Help is available in several languages. So call us at 1-800-LIFENET (1-800-543-3638). We're here to help.