

## Strategies to help your child after a traumatic event

Here are some strategies and exercises that you can try with your child to help them after a traumatic experience.

### Strategies for calming down

Here are some simple things that you can teach your child to do to calm themselves when they are feeling upset.

1. Talk about my problem with a friend or trusted adult
2. Hang out with my friends
3. Listen to my favourite music
4. Ask a trusted adult or a friend for a hug
5. Do some exercise with a friend or family member  
(running, dancing to music, riding my bike, going for a walk)
6. Make something by drawing, painting, sewing, knitting or cooking
7. Have a warm bath
8. Do a quick relaxation exercise
9. Write in my diary
10. Use positive self-talk

## Positive self-talk

You can encourage your child to use positive self-talk. Children and teenagers who have been through a traumatic experience will have a wide range of thoughts and feelings about the trauma, and about life after the trauma. Some might be positive and make them feel happy (for example, 'I get to spend more time with Dad now', 'I don't have to go to school for a few weeks'). But some will be negative, and positive self-talk can help your child to focus less on the unhelpful thoughts that bring about bad feelings. You can teach your child to use positive self-talk when they are thinking about something horrible that happened, or are worried that something awful might happen.

For example, teach them to remind themselves that:

*I am safe now.*

*I was strong to survive that.*

*I have people who can help me.*

*I have done a lot of things well before - I'm sure I can again!*

# Quick relaxation exercises

Help your child to select a few things from these lists and try them out.

## Calm breathing

1. Sit in a chair or lie on the floor
2. Take a breath in through your nose and count to 3 and imagine a soothing colour
3. Breathe out through your mouth and say the word 'calm' to yourself
4. Repeat this 10 times

## Imagine a happy place

1. Imagine a calm and happy place
2. Tell yourself what you can see, hear, smell and feel in this happy place
3. Practise your calm breathing whilst you are picturing your happy place

## Quick muscle relaxation

1. Hold your arms above your head and hold the stretch – feel the tension in your arms – now drop your arms down by your side and feel them relax.
2. Practise tensing and then relaxing muscles in your hands, legs, face, and stomach, and wherever else you feel stress.