



Resource Family Connection

News, Events, and Information Benefiting
the Children of Waukesha County
May and June, 2017



Helping Children Cope with Traumatic Stress

By: Melinda Smith, M.A., Lawrence Robinson, and Jeanne Segal, Ph.D.

The intense, confusing, and frightening emotions that follow a traumatic event or natural disaster can be even more pronounced in children - whether they directly experienced the traumatic event or were repeatedly exposed to horrific media images after the fact. While children and adolescents are more vulnerable to being traumatized than adults, with the right support and reassurance they are also able to recover faster. Using these coping tips, you can help your child regain emotional balance, restore his or her trust in the world, and move on from the traumatic event.

What are the effects of traumatic stress on children?

Unexpectedly losing a loved one or being involved in a natural disaster, motor vehicle accident, plane crash, or terrorist attack can be overwhelmingly stressful for children. A traumatic event can undermine their sense of security, leaving them feeling helpless and vulnerable, especially if the event stemmed from an act of violence, such as a mass shooting or terrorist attack. Even kids or teens not directly affected by a disaster can become traumatized when repeatedly exposed to horrific images of the event on the news or social media.

EFFECT OF TRAUMATIC STRESS ON CHILDREN AND TEENS

Children age 5 and under may:

- ⊗ Show signs of fear
- ⊗ Cling to parent or caregiver
- ⊗ Cry, scream, or whimper
- ⊗ Move aimlessly or become immobile
- ⊗ Return to behaviors common to being younger, such as thumbsucking or bedwetting

Children age 6 to 11 may:

- ⊗ Lose interest in friends, family, and fun activities
- ⊗ Have nightmares or other sleep problems
- ⊗ Become irritable, disruptive, or angry
- ⊗ Struggle with school and homework
- ⊗ Complain of physical problems
- ⊗ Develop unfounded fears
- ⊗ Feel depressed, emotionally numb, or guilt over what happened

Adolescents age 12 to 17 may:

- ⊗ Have flashbacks to the event, nightmares, or other sleep problems
- ⊗ Avoid reminders of the event
- ⊗ Abuse drugs, alcohol, or tobacco
- ⊗ Be disruptive, disrespectful, or destructive
- ⊗ Have physical complaints
- ⊗ Feel isolated, guilty, or depressed
- ⊗ Lose interest in hobbies and interests
- ⊗ Have suicidal thoughts

Whatever the age of your child, it's important to offer reassurance and support following a traumatic event. A child's reaction to a disaster or traumatic event can be greatly influenced by their parents' response, so it's important to educate yourself about traumatic stress. The more you know about the symptoms, effects, and treatment options, the better equipped you'll be to help your child recover. With your love and support, the unsettling thoughts and feelings of traumatic stress can start to fade and your child's life can return to normal in the days or weeks following the event.

Traumatic Stress Recovery Tip 1: Minimize Media Exposure

Children who've experienced a traumatic event can often find relentless media coverage to be further traumatizing. Excessive exposure to images of a disturbing event - such as repeatedly viewing video clips on

social media or news sites - can even create traumatic stress in children or teens who were not directly affected by the event.

- ⊗ **Limit your child's media exposure to the traumatic event.** Don't let your child watch the news or check social media just before bed, and make use of parental controls on the TV, computer, and tablet to prevent your child from repeatedly viewing disturbing footage.
- ⊗ **As much as you can, watch news reports of the traumatic event with your child.** You can reassure your child as you're watching and help place information in context.
- ⊗ **Avoid exposing your child to graphic images and videos.** It's often less traumatizing for a child or teen to read the newspaper rather than watch television coverage or view video clips of the event.

Traumatic Stress Recovery Tip 2: Engage Your Child

You can't force your child to recover from traumatic stress, but you can play a major role in the healing process by simply spending time together and talking face to face, free from TV, games, and other distractions. Do your best to create an environment where your kids feel safe to communicate what they're feeling and to ask questions.

- ⊗ **Provide your child with ongoing opportunities to talk** about what they went through or what they're seeing in the media. Encourage them to ask questions and express their concerns but don't force them to talk.
- ⊗ **Acknowledge and validate your child's concerns.** The traumatic event may bring up unrelated fears and issues in your child. Comfort for your child comes from feeling understood and accepted by you, so acknowledge their fears even if they don't seem relevant to you.
- ⊗ **Reassure your child.** The event was not their fault, you love them, and it's OK for them to feel upset, angry, or scared.
- ⊗ **Don't pressure your child into talking.** It can be very difficult for some kids to talk about a traumatic experience. A young child may find it easier to draw a picture illustrating their feelings rather than talk about them. You can then talk with your child about what they've drawn.
- ⊗ **Be honest.** While you should tailor the information you share according to your child's age, it's important to be honest. Don't say nothing's wrong if something *is* wrong.
- ⊗ **Do "normal" things with your child,** things that have nothing to do with the traumatic event. Encourage your child to seek out friends and pursue games, sports, and hobbies that they enjoyed before the traumatic event. Go on family outings to the park or beach, enjoy a games night, or watch a funny or uplifting movie together.

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Angela Brost - "Rewarded and Grateful"



Becoming a foster parent was undoubtedly the most rewarding thing I have ever done. It has even topped by 20 plus years as a police officer. I appreciate everything Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services has done. Not only for myself, but also my children throughout their custody with Waukesha County. The county saved these kids, and essentially their parents too. Thank you. I have a whole new found understanding and a

perspective of social services that I never knew existed while employed for the county because of my experience. My family is forever grateful.

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Traumatic Stress Recovery Tip 3: Encourage Physical Activity

Physical activity can burn off adrenaline, release mood-enhancing endorphins, and help your child to sleep better at night.

- ⊗ **Find a sport that your child enjoys.** Activities such as basketball, soccer, running, martial arts, or swimming that require moving both the arms and legs can help rouse your child's nervous system from that "stuck" feeling that often follows a traumatic experience.
- ⊗ **Offer to participate in sports, games, or physical activities with your child.** If they seem resistant to get off the couch, play some of their favorite music and dance together. Once children get moving, they start to feel more energetic.
- ⊗ **Encourage your child to go outside** to play with friends or a pet and blow off steam.
- ⊗ **Schedule a family outing** to a hiking trail, swimming pool, or park.
- ⊗ **Take younger children to a playground,** activity center, or arrange play dates.

Traumatic Stress Recover Tip 4: Feed Your Child a Healthy Diet

The food your child eats can have a profound impact on his or her mood and ability to cope with traumatic stress. Processed and convenience food, refined carbohydrates, and sugary drinks and snacks can create mood swings and worsen symptoms of traumatic stress. Conversely, eating plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, high-quality protein, and healthy fats, especially omega-3 fatty acids, can help your child better cope with the ups and downs that follow disturbing experience.

- ⊗ **Focus on overall diet rather than specific foods.** Kids should be eating whole, minimally processed food - food that is as close to its natural form as possible.
- ⊗ **Limit fried food, sweet desserts, sugary snacks and cereals, and refined flour.** These can all exacerbate symptoms of traumatic stress in kids.
- ⊗ **Be a role model.** The childhood impulse to imitate is strong so don't ask your child to eat vegetables while you gorge on soda and French fries.
- ⊗ **Cook more meals at home.** Restaurant and takeout meals have more added sugar and unhealthy fat so cooking at home can have a huge impact on your kids' health. If you make large batches, cooking just a few times can be enough to feed your family for the whole week.
- ⊗ **Make mealtimes about more than just food.** Gathering the family around a table for a meal is an ideal opportunity to talk and listen to your child without the distraction of TV, phones, or computers.

Traumatic Stress Recovery Tip 5: Rebuild Trust and Safety

Trauma can alter the way a child sees the world, making it suddenly seem a much more dangerous and frightening place. Your child may find it more difficult to trust both their environment and other people. You can help by rebuilding your child's sense of safety and security.

- ⊗ **Create routines.** Establishing a predictable structure and schedule to your child's or teen's life can help to make the world seem more stable again. Try to maintain regular times for meals, homework, and family activities.
- ⊗ **Minimize stress at home.** Try to make sure your child has space and time for rest, play, and fun.
- ⊗ **Manage your own stress.** The more calm, relaxed, and focused you are, the better you'll be able to help your child.
- ⊗ **Speak of the future and make plans.** This can help counteract the common feeling among traumatized children that the future is scary, bleak, and unpredictable.
- ⊗ **Keep your promises.** You can help to rebuild your child's trust by being trustworthy. Be consistent and follow through on the things you say you're going to do.
- ⊗ **If you don't know the answer to a question, don't be afraid to admit it.** Don't jeopardize your child's trust in you by making something up.
- ⊗ **Remember that children often personalize situations.** They may worry about their own safety even if the traumatic event occurred far away. Reassure your child and help place the situation in context.

When to Seek Treatment for Your Child's Traumatic Stress

Usually, your child's feelings of anxiety, numbness, confusion, guilt, and despair following a traumatic event will start to fade within a relatively short time. However, if the traumatic stress reaction is so intense and persistent that it's getting in the way of your child's ability to function at school or home, he or she may need help from a mental health professional - preferably a trauma specialist.

Traumatic Stress Warning Signs

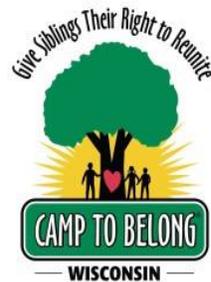
- ⊗ It's been six weeks, and your child is not feeling any better
- ⊗ Your child is having trouble functioning at school
- ⊗ Your child is experiencing terrifying memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- ⊗ The symptoms of traumatic stress appear as physical complaints such as headaches, stomach pains, or sleep disturbances
- ⊗ Your child is having an increasingly difficult time relating to friends and family
- ⊗ Your child or teen is experiencing suicidal thoughts
- ⊗ Your child is avoiding more and more things that remind them of the traumatic event

Camp To Belong

Brothers and sisters placed in out-of-home care have a better chance of obtaining permanence if they're able to maintain a connection with one another. Camp To Belong is another way for siblings to have a meaningful connection with each other while also having an enriching camp experience.

This year's camp will be August 13-18, 2017. For more information about Camp To Belong, contact Kate or Rob Bauer, (920) 904-5643 or camptobelongwisconsin@gmail.com, or visit their website (<http://www.ctb-wi.org>) or

Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/camptobelongwisconsin>)



How To Fill The Down Time During Summer

For most of us, summertime means sunny days outdoors, ice cream treats, and sports games. But for many kids, the summer months are also the time of "the summer slide." The summer slide is essentially a learning loss among students of all ages, primarily those in elementary and middle school, due to a lack of intellectual engagement throughout the summer break. So what can caretakers do about this? Take the kids to the library! Reading is one of the best ways to combat the summer slide, as it builds vocabulary, critical thinking skills, comprehension, and more. Every public library in Waukesha County offers summer reading programs for children, teens, and adults that run from June until August. More than just checking books off a list, the summer reading programs pair fun activities, like building a LEGO city or interacting with lizards and snakes, with an emphasis on reading throughout the summer. Summer reading programs encourage kids to have fun with reading, offering prizes and other incentives for reaching their reading goals, while also helping kids develop self-confidence and positive attitudes toward reading and the library. Best of all, research has shown that summer reading programs positively benefit the learning development of children. Signing up is easy; just visit your local library to get your whole family started. Make reading a priority over the summer and everyone wins! To find out more about the summer reading programs, visit your local library's website or to go <http://www.bridgeslibrarysystem.org/summer-library-program>

Foster Care Youth and College

Every college has an identified person specifically to help youth who have been in foster care navigate the college world. This link is a list of those contacts at all of the colleges in Wisconsin. <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/files/youthservices/pdf/uw-fyc.pdf>

Thank You

Thank you to all Foster Families that participated in the Bunny Event. Save the date for our Play Date in the Park event on June 6th! Invites will be sent out in May!



Five Effective Ways to Respond to Tantrums and Meltdowns

By: Melissa Benaroya

Do you wish your preschooler or toddler would JUST STOP WHINING? That your child would go to bed maybe the second time she's asked rather than the 100th? That your children would stop fighting, yelling, tormenting each other, making outlandish demands, or otherwise acting outrageously? If only!

Parents tend to complain about our kids' "out of control" behavior - that our kids don't listen, don't behave, or don't respect us or their siblings. But expecting young children to master impulse control is like expecting them to multiply fractions: not realistic. Until about age 7, they just don't have that rational brain that allows for planning, foresight, and considering others. You can't change that fact. But what you can change is how you react to your children's outbursts - and in doing so prompt calmer behavior from them. When you respond with empathy rather than exasperation or outrage your children are far less likely to resist or retaliate.

Our children are going to replicate our behavior and emotional state because that's how our brains are wired. The idea isn't to change your children but to change how you show up and communicate with them.

Why Their Fury Sparks Our Fury

You know how yawning is contagious? Or how watching someone sip an icy cold lemonade suddenly makes you thirsty? That's because of nerve cells in our brain called "mirror neurons." We humans are social animals and connect through shared emotions and experiences. So when our children are having a big tantrum, that cues our bodies to react the same way. But mirror neurons can work in your family's favor, too. When you stay calm, your child's body will start replicating your emotional state.

Some children are innately more impulsive than others their age and more prone to outbursts. But no matter what your child's temperament, or your own, you can help them develop self-control by learning to stay calm yourself.

How to Respond to Tantrums and Meltdowns

- ☉ **Take a Deep Breath.** Before you say a word, let alone shout, "Do you SERIOUSLY think it's OK to whack your brother on the head with a Pokemon binder?" inhale deeply and then slowly exhale. Those few seconds can mean the difference between flipping your lid and keeping it (somewhat tightly) sealed.

If you're feeling too enraged to even take a deep breath, that's your cue to exit the room until you're able to chill out.

- ☉ **Start With Empathetic Statements.** Empathy is the key to unlocking your inner calm. It's important to let your child know you understand and accept their feelings before you say anything or do anything else.

So instead of, "How many times do I have to tell you it's bedtime? Get in bed NOW!" try, "Yeah, I know, it's hard to go to bed when you're having fun playing!"

A child isn't likely to dive under the covers just because you've shown concern for her feelings. But, empathy opens the door to a child hearing what's going to come next rather than becoming defensive. When children don't feel heard, it's like: Oh, you didn't hear me? Then I'm just going to say it louder!

Empathy is also a much more effective response to defiance than over-explaining. Our tendency as parents is to go on and on, to repeat ourselves, and try to rationalize with our child. This is irritating to children and causes them to tune us out.

- ☉ **Resist the Urge to Punish.** When your children blatantly defy you or behave unacceptably (see: whacking with Pokemon lunchbox), you may feel like you want to "teach them a lesson" or "show them who's boss." You may think doing anything less would send the message: I'm a pushover! Go ahead, walk all over me!

In truth, inflicting shame, blame, or pain on a child will accomplish nothing good. There's no learning opportunity when you respond with punishment. It just makes children fear their parents. Either they will think I hate you or I am going to find another way to get away with this.

This doesn't mean your child has license to hit, steal from her siblings, or party in her room until midnight. Consequences are fine - your child doesn't need to like what's coming - as long as they're reasonable and delivered respectfully.

In the long run, "We're going to put these race cars away for the night, and you guys can play with them tomorrow," will do more for your children than, "Go to your room NOW - both of you! And forget playing with these cars for a week!"

Kids do better when they feel better.

- ☉ **Let Your Child Chill.** These days, our children's lives are so filled with gadgets, activities, and demands that kids often use up their limited reserves of self-control. If we're constantly asking children to perform tasks or follow our requests they'll become less and less successful.

Scheduled downtime and small play breaks in chores or homework will help your children recharge, behave better, and accomplish what you need them to.

- ☉ **Model Self-Control and Restraint.** If every time your phone beeps you pick it up, you're not modeling impulse control for your children. Likewise, if you shout, "Jerk! Nobody knows how to drive around here!" when a car cuts you off, you're not demonstrating how to remain calm. We can't expect children to be able to control emotions when we don't.

How you respond to frustration and disappointment will strongly influence how your child responds to these strong emotions. Try, "Oh man, I just dropped the dinner salad on the floor! How frustrating! I'm going to take a deep breath and then I will clean up this mess and start over."

As your children mature, they'll naturally develop more self-control, but you can make a difference along the way. Just keep your expectations for impulse control age-appropriate. Toddlers and preschoolers' brains are still very much under construction.

The Clothing Closet is Busting at the Seams!



The Clothing Closet is running out of room with donations of infant and toddler clothing. All of the clothing is in good condition with no stains or imperfections. We have some really nice things in there, and many items still have store tags on them!! We are hoping that Kinship and Foster Families will use this resource. Please contact Linda Finn, one of our Human Services Support Specialists, at 262-548-7254, to arrange a personal appointment to come in and "shop" in the clothing closet!

Kinship Family Appreciation Picnic

When: Saturday, July 22, 2017

Where: Waukesha County Human Services, 514 Riverview Ave, Waukesha, WI

Time: 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

Waukesha County would like to recognize our Kinship Families. We invite you to join us at the Department for a picnic and fun games. Event will occur rain or shine. Lunch will be provided, as well as fun game prizes. Raffle prizes will be handed out as well!

Register by July 14 at <https://kinshippicnic.eventbrite.com>



Additional Training and Events



Training Offered By Waukesha County

Parent Café

Parent Café's are an educational opportunity for parents to come together and deal with the stressors, worries and challenges of parenting in a supportive environment.

June 19, October 3, December 5, 2017
6:00 PM - 7:45 PM

Center for Excellence

N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha, WI
To register for childcare, RSVP or for questions call, 262-521-0317.

Support Group For Dads

A group to enhance group members' experience as fathers. Topics of discussion will include coping with stress; developing a better relationship with partner/spouse/child's mother; identifying positive role models in your life; identifying how you are a positive role model for your child(ren); discussing your role as a father and what you would like to change or improve.

Fourth Tuesday of each month

May 23 2017

June 27, 2017

6:00PM - 7:30PM

Parents Place

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575

Foster Parent Support Group

On-sight daycare is available, but you must register in advance to secure a slot, as there may be a cut-off, depending on the number of children.

First Thursday of each month

May 4, 2017

June 1, 2017

6:00 PM - 7:30 PM

Parents Place

1570 E. Moreland Blvd., Waukesha, WI
262-549-5575

Training Sponsored By Parents United Consortium

(additional information available
at <http://parentsunitedwi.org>)

Parenting with Love and Logic

May 2, 2017

6:00 - 8:30 PM

Country Springs Hotel and Conference Center
2810 Golf Rd, Pewaukee, WI

Understanding the Impact of Trauma in Children and Adolescents

May 10, 2017

9:00 - 11:30 AM

Country Springs Hotel and Conference Center
2810 Golf Rd, Pewaukee, WI



Required Training

Required Training For All Relative Care Providers, Level 1 and Level 2 Foster Homes

Foster Parent Orientation – The Foster Parent Orientation is open to anyone interested in becoming a foster parent. **If you are currently in the process of becoming a licensed foster parent, you are required to attend this Orientation class prior to the approval of your foster care license.** Please

complete the on-line Pre-Placement training prior to attending the Orientation session. The online Pre-Placement training is located at

<http://wcpds.wisc.edu/Pre-Placement.htm>

Please save the certificates after you have completed each Module. These are required to become licensed.

WHEN: May 9, June 13, July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10, November 14, and December 12, 2017

TIME: 5:30 - 6:30 pm

WHERE: Waukesha County Human Services, 514 Riverview Ave., Waukesha, WI

RSVP to Libby Sinclair at

esinclair@waukeshacounty.gov or 262-548-7277

(There is no childcare available.)



Social Media Use with Teens and Youth

Presented by Detective David Feyen.

A light dinner and daycare will be provided.

May 18, 2017

6:00 PM

Center for Excellence

N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha, WI

RSVP for this training: [http://](http://waukeshafostercaretraining.eventbrite.com)

waukeshafostercaretraining.eventbrite.com

Trauma and Behavior

Presented by Tonia Stofa, MA, LPC.

What is behavior versus mental health? Breaking down trauma, PTSD, Reactive Attachment Disorder, and mental health from "bad behavior." Gain a better understanding of trauma versus developmentally appropriate behaviors and tools to help deal with both.

A light dinner and daycare will be provided.

June 15, 2017

6:00 PM

Center for Excellence

N4W22000 Bluemound Road, Waukesha, WI

RSVP for this training: [http://](http://waukeshafostercaretraining.eventbrite.com)

waukeshafostercaretraining.eventbrite.com



Contact Numbers:

Waukesha County
Health & Human Services
262-548-7212

Vickie Smith, Foster Care
Licensing Supervisor
262-970-4761

Susan Peck, Foster Care Level 2
Coordinator
262-896-8574

Libby Sinclair, Relative Foster
Care Level 1 Coordinator
262-548-7277

Megan Quandt, Kinship & Foster
Care Coordinator
262-548-7373

Jessica Morris, Kinship & Foster
Care Coordinator
262-548-7256

Eve Altizer, Ongoing Social Work
Supervisor
262-548-7272

Eric Calvino, Ongoing Social Work
Supervisor
262-548-7271

Social Workers:

Tracy Clark 262-548-7270

Megan Fishler 262-896-8570

Abbey Girman 262-548-7695

Sharon Godwin 262-548-7684

Mallorie Hebeker 262-896-6857

Laura Jahnke 262-548-7359

Jamie Kasten 262-548-7265

Jessica Larsen 262-548-7346

Maria Maurer 262-548-7345

Chelsey Nisbet 262-896-6896

Rachel O'Sullivan 262-548-7639

Stacy Pawlak 262-548-7262

Elizabeth Russo 262-548-7349

Kim Sampson 262-548-7273

Linda Senger 262-548-7698

Sara Waldron 262-548-7371

Jamie West 262-548-7264

Children's Mental Health Outreach
262-548-7666

Medical Emergency: 911
Family Emergency: 211 or
262-547-3388

If an Allegation of Abuse or
Neglect has been made
against you, please call:

FASPP
Norma Schoenberg
920-922-9627