FOR FAMILIES

Impact on children
- World has become a frightening place - loss of sense of safety
- They want to stay close to parents/relatives
- Poor concentration - underachieving at school
- Go back to the behaviour of a younger child
- Become more naughty or disobedient
- Repetitive and/or destructive play

Impact on parents
- Less available to meet child’s physical and emotional needs (because they are preoccupied with their own issues)
- Don’t want their children to go out as normal (i.e. away from them)
- Can become too lenient in their management of their children’s behaviours

Impact on families
- Family members can feel isolated
- Difficulty in talking about the traumatic event
- May be missing a member(s)
- More arguing due to increase in irritability
- Confusion - when different people respond in different ways and recover at different speeds

HOW TO HELP RECOVERY
- Love the ones you are with.
- Encourage talking (without forcing it).
- Don’t make unrealistic promises to your children.
- Make your home a safe as possible.
- Try and re-establish normal routines (as far as practicable).
- Try and maintain good self-care.
- Make some allowance for your children’s behavior – but still maintain good behavioral boundaries.
- Don’t worry about having trauma symptoms (even though they can be distressing) - just manage/experience them - give it time.
- If symptoms don’t go away in 6-8 weeks consider seeking professional help.

NORMAL RESPONSES to TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Dr. Stephen Coulter
UMN Mental Health Advisor

These notes are provided for the general good and can be shared and circulated freely.

United Mission to Nepal
PO Box 126
Kathmandu, NEPAL
communications@umn.org.np
umn.org.np
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WHAT IS PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAUMA?

- 'Trauma' means a wound
- Psychological trauma is a wound to the 'Psyche' or mind
- Just a physical wound heals over time by natural means so too wounded minds heal through natural processes
- Traumatic events can wound our minds due to the overload of sensory information about something outside our usual experience that hits us in a short space of time.

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER

- Full recovery (in weeks or a few months) is the normal outcome for people who have experienced a traumatic event
- In the beginning most trauma symptoms protect us from being overwhelmed. They only become a problem if they don't go away
- Children can learn coping skills that will help them in the future when they meet other difficulties
- Reactions can be delayed. Particularly at risk are those who have immediately had to take on significant responsibility for family, friends, and within organisations

NORMAL RESPONSES

Intrusive Symptoms
- Recurrent involuntary memories
- Traumatic nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Emotional distress after exposure to things that remind you of the traumatic event
- Odd bodily sensations & pains

Avoidance of things that remind you of the traumatic event
- Trying to block out Trauma-related thoughts or feelings (sometimes by use of drugs/alcohol)
- Avoiding reminders e.g. people, places, activities, or situations associated with the traumatic event

Changes in thinking and mood
- Cannot remember some parts of the traumatic event
- Negative beliefs e.g., 'I am bad', 'I am to blame', 'The world is completely dangerous'
- Feelings of fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame
- Reduced interest in (pre-traumatic) significant activities e.g. work, hobbies, sports, schoolwork
- Feeling cut off from other people
- Feeling emotionally numb (not experiencing negative or positive emotions)

High arousal of the nervous system
- Irritable or aggressive behaviour
- Self-destructive or reckless behaviour
- Hyper-vigilance
- Exaggerated startle response
- Difficult to concentrate
- Sleep disturbance

Peoples' biggest issues after trauma can be:
- Anger
- Guilt
- Blame
- Shame
- Questions about the meaning of life
- Depression
- Relationship difficulties

BUT, PLEASE NOTE:

"Not all psychological injury can be encompassed by a list of symptoms or disorders. Trauma can alter the very meaning we give to our lives, and can produce feelings and experiences that are not easily categorised in diagnostic manuals."