

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Besides seeking professional help, other helpful strategies to consider:

- Be understanding of your child's fears and emotions. Do not downplay the emotions he/she is feeling or ask him/her to snap out of it as this can often make it more distressing for the child.
- Be emotionally available and let your child know that you are available to talk to him/her if he/she wishes to. Do not force your child to speak about the trauma but also do not avoid talking about it.
- Inform the school so that teachers and the school counselor will understand towards your child's behaviour and emotional changes and to be involved if necessary. The child may need to see the school counselor when he/she is emotionally agitated in school.
- In the initial period of the trauma, your child may need to sleep with you to feel safe. When your child awakes from a nightmare, gently reassure him/her that it was a nightmare and that he/she is safe now. Slowly move your child towards sleeping on his/her own if this was the situation before the trauma. (Sleep on separate bed followed by you being in your child's room till he/she falls asleep and finally independent sleeping.)
- Help your child to gradually be able to put himself/herself in distressing situations starting from the least distressing situation to the most distressing situation. Acknowledge your child's fears but also assure your child that these anxiety-provoking situations (e.g. people smoking, being in the kitchen etc as in the case study above) are usually safe. Point out to your child more appropriate safety behaviours he/she can engage in to allay his/her fears, (e.g. Not placing rags/paper near open fire)
- Communicate closely with your child's therapist to find out what are the excusable activities in school. Take note that these will change as the child's therapy progresses as therapy entails getting the child to gradually face up to the trauma-related situations that the student is avoiding. The objective is to gradually return the child to his/her normal routines.