

Little Listeners in an Uncertain World: Providing Safety and Support through Community Trauma

Applying the Information

While it is impossible to plan for everything that might happen in a community, it is helpful to think ahead about the resources and needs of your program in supporting staff, families and young children through community crises. Use the questions below to consider how your program would serve your community in the event of a community trauma. Individuals can do this on their own, to consider how they can use what they heard on this audioconference. Teams can work together to consider strategies and procedures at your program.

What kinds of community trauma are likely to affect your community? Are there weather hazards that are likely to affect your community (tornadoes, floods, snowstorms, etc.)? Are the majority of workers in your community employed in one or two trades or companies that would devastate the economy if they went under? In this new age of terrorism, does your community have special concerns?

Have you, individually or as a team, been impacted by community trauma in the past? Consider your response at that time. What were you able to provide for staff, families and the children? How did you link with other community organizations? What did you do well? What do you wish had gone better?

Have you worked with children or families displaced by a community trauma who have relocated to your area? If so, how did that trauma and the move to your community impact them? How were you able to provide a sense of security and support? What more would you like to do?

Consider your program. What plans do you currently have in place to support your community through a community crisis? What partnerships have you developed with other community agencies and providers to support families with young children in your area? Carefully think about your community, then make a plan! What can you do to strengthen your program's response?

Community trauma is just one kind of trauma that could affect families and young children in your program. Unfortunately, it is likely that staff will be working with children and families traumatized in one way or another at some point in your program. Have you ever worked with a child or family that had experienced trauma? How did you recognize trauma? How did you provide support? What did you do well? What do you wish you had done better?

Consider the *Principles for Practice* (p. 4). Do they make sense to you? Are there any that don't make sense for your program and your community? Why or why not?

Look at Principle for Practice # 3. Do you agree? Why is it so important, in a community crisis, to make sure that staff needs are met first? What supports are currently available to staff? What supports can you add in the event of a community trauma?

Use the role play on page 9. Adults who have been through a traumatic experience often do not want to discuss what happened, particularly with children. Would you be open to having this discussion with a toddler who you work with? How does it help her?

The Early Head Start National Resource Center @ ZERO TO THREE



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Selected Resource List

For more information, see the following resources:

- Farish, J.M. (1995). *When disaster strikes: Helping young children cope*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Hanson, K.L. and M.J. McKenzie, As far as my life, it don't make me no difference – When life is always unpredictable.” *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 22(3) (December 2001/ January 2002): 45-46.
- Kinsel, J.D., “Caring for children victimized by the World Trade Center disaster: One volunteer’s reflections”. *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 22(3) (December 2001/ January 2002): 36-37.
- Osofsky, J.D., “Helping young children and families cope with trauma in a new era.” *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 22(3) (December 2001/ January 2002):18-21.
- Solnit, A.J., “Supporting parents, helping children: Some questions and principles.” *ZERO TO THREE Journal*, 22(3) (December 2001/ January 2002): 16-17.
- Greenman, J. (2001). *What happened to the world? Helping children cope in turbulent times*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Honig, A. (2001). *Secure relationships: Nurturing infant/toddler attachment in early care settings*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Ippen, C.G., Lieberman, A.F., & Van Horn, P. (2005). *After the hurricane: Helping young children heal*. Rockville, MD: The National Child Traumatic Stress Network.
- Levine, K. (2001). *Little listeners in an uncertain world: Coping strategies for you and your child after September 11*. Washington, DC : ZERO TO THREE.
- Lieberman, A. *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1993.
- Masten, A. S. “Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes in Development.” In *Annual Progress in Child Psychiatry and Child Development*, edited by M. E., Hertzig & E. A. Farber, 227-238. New York: Routledge, 2005.
- Perry, B. D. *Helping Traumatized Children: A Brief Overview for Caregivers*. Houston, TX: The ChildTrauma Academy, 2002.
- Rice, K.F., & Groves, B.M. *Hope and Healing: A Caregiver’s Guide to Helping Young Children Affected by Trauma*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE, 2005.

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Organizations (many of the resources listed above are available online at the following web addresses):

The ChildTrauma Academy, 281-932-1375, www.childtrauma.org

National Association for the Education for Young Children (NAEYC), 1-800-424-2460, www.naeyc.org

National Child Traumatic Stress Network: The National Center for Child Traumatic Stress, 310-235-2633, www.nctsnet.org

ZERO TO THREE, 1-800-899-4301, www.zerotothree.org/coping

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