

Informational Resources on the web:

<http://www.nasponline.org>, National Association of School Psychologists, Click on Coping with War/Terrorism at the bottom of the page

www.nmha.org, National Mental Health Association

For direct help:

- If you are covered by health insurance, you are eligible for mental health services. Please check with your provider for a listing of professional who you can call.
- If your employer has an Employee Assistance Program you can call them for help.
- American Red Cross, 734-2101, Emergency, short-term counseling
- Queen's Hospital, Support Groups, 1st and 3rd Fridays
- State Of Hawai`i Department Of Health, Adult Mental Health Division

Family Guidance Centers:

- Central O'ahu (453-5900)
- Diamond Head (733-9393)
- Kalihi-Palama (848-0741)

CHILD & FAMILY SERVICE

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Child & Family Service

Helping families with tough issues have better lives.

Emotional Effects of the War in Iraq and Potential Terrorist Attacks

Young Children

Children

Adolescents

Adults

What you can do to help

Where to turn for additional help



Adapted from various sources by Child and Family Service

Responding Normally to an Abnormal Event

Americans may experience more tension and stress in these next few weeks, as we engage in war and worry about terrorist activities. These are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.

Tragic events affect everyone. Here are a few helpful tips to assist you in coping.

- Stay connected – Talk to people you trust about your anxiety and fear. You will feel less isolated if you share your feelings with others. A sense of community and belonging is your best strategy for coping.
- Adults need to help children feel safe. Help them understand the facts of what is going on and how these events effect them. Help them understand the difference between an event being possible and yet the probability that it won't happen to them. Talk with them about the people who are working to keep them safe and what you are doing to keep them safe; i.e. family safety plan.
- Maintain as normal a routine as possible.
- Monitor TV watching – keep informed of the facts but don't watch the endless coverage.
- Emphasize people's resiliency – we have coped with many difficult situations in the past.
- Remain optimistic – if something happens, we will manage and we will recover.

While each individual's reaction will be different, there are some patterns of behavior that help us to understand

what others and we are going through. Included in this pamphlet are some tips on how to help children and adults deal with some of their feelings. These tips were compiled from various credible sources and are presented as a quick guide – not a comprehensive treatment approach.

For situations where feelings and behavior linger, please seek professional assistance.

There is a section for:

- Young children (birth – 5 years of age)
- Children (5 – 12 years of age)
- Adolescents (12 – 19 years of age), and
- Adults.

There are also sources for information and referral, more information, and direct assistance on the reverse side of this pamphlet.

YOUNG CHILDREN (birth to 5 years of age)

Major concern:

Young children respond to the stress and changes they perceive in adults around them.

Signs and symptoms:

- Irritable
- Cry or whimper more than usual
- Want to be cuddled, reassured
- Regress to bedwetting, thumb sucking, fear of the dark

Ways to support:

- It is normal for children to regress – so accept the regression temporarily

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Responding Normally to an Abnormal Event

- Be empathic and supportive
- Try to return to normal routine
- Show real but not extreme emotions – your child has no way to understand what is occurring
- Be predictable and even-tempered
- Listen and spend time with your child

CHILDREN

(5 – 11 years of age)

Major concern:

"Will I be hurt?" "Will my family be in danger?"

Signs and symptoms:

- Fear
- Anxiety
- Regression – such as nightmares, fear of the dark
- Somatic complaints – such as headaches, stomach aches, nausea
- School problems – such as refusing to go to school, problems with peers, can't concentrate, performing poorly

Ways to support:

- Show empathy – allow them to talk and express what they think and feel
- Answer all questions from your child as factually as possible, but appropriate to their age
- Explain your own thoughts and feelings to your child if they are

concerned about your reaction. For example: "Mom feels mad and cranky right now because of _____, but it's not about you."

- Show real but not extreme emotion – i.e. uncontrolled sobbing
- Limit TV exposure and exposure to adult conversations about war
- Calm their fears, remind them that we are safe right now, the government, the President, the firefighters, police, doctors and the are ready to protect us
- It is normal for children to regress under this type of ongoing stress, to act younger or to act out. Reassure them that you are there to keep them safe.
- Provide them structure. Stick with your regular rules, but provide them with extra support and reminders to follow those rules

ADOLESCENTS

(12 – 19 years of age)

Major concern:

- Loss of faith in adults, fatalism, isolation and withdrawal from family support, need to appear more competent than they feel

Signs and symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Fear
- Confusion
- Depression and sadness, thoughts of suicide
- Aggression, anti-social behavior
- Alcohol or drug use

Ways to support

- Listen, listen, listen and try not to lecture
- Listen with all your senses, because with adolescents, what they say doesn't always tell you as much about what they mean as their body language and tone
- Talk about their concerns and perceptions, encourage them to verbalize thoughts and feelings
- Don't get defensive if they are angry at you or authorities for letting this happen – listen empathetically
- Ask for their ideas on what should be done
- Help them find outlets for their concern – write congress, raise money to help victims, give service to the community

ADULTS

Major concern:

- Depression, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, abuse of alcohol or drugs

Signs and symptoms:

- Persistently feeling sad or empty, excessive crying
- Loss of pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Using alcohol or drugs to cope with the trauma
- Persistent, distressing thoughts
- In severe or prolonged cases, thoughts or plans to hurt or kill oneself
- Sleep interruption or insomnia

- Persistent anxiety or hallucinations or flashbacks

Ways to support:

- Encourage adults to talk to those they trust about how they are reacting
- Encourage adults to keep to their regular routine as much as possible
- Encourage exercise and good nutrition
- Find outlets for feelings by volunteering, journaling about feelings, writing legislators
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Exercise in moderation

If problems are significant or if you or your child are not showing signs of improvement after a few weeks then please seek professional help.

For information and referral:

Child and Family Service

- Oahu, 681-3500
- Hilo, 935-2188
- Kona, 959-6118
- Maui, 877-6888
- Kauai, 245-5914

ASK Aloha United Way

- 211 (Toll-Free Statewide)