Supporting Your Child After a Trauma

A trauma is a shocking event or situation that causes distress or emotional upset. This kind of event can interrupt a child’s everyday life.

Some tips to keep in mind:

- Use simple, direct, and honest words to talk with your child about the event.
- Provide opportunities for play to help your child process feelings and express emotions.
- Use children’s books to help your child talk to you about the event.
- Continue your child’s routine as much as possible. Children feel safer when things are expected.
- A child may feel guilty for the event, like it was somehow their fault. Try to not blame them and let your child know they can safely talk about what happened.
- Ask questions that will encourage expression and create a discussion about the event.
- Look for additional support for your child if post-trauma symptoms continue and are concerning to you (see below).

Symptoms you may notice:

Typical responses may be:

- Not able to verbalize a clear understanding of what is happening

Behaviors that may show a need for more support:

- Quickly engage in play during and/or after difficult conversations
- Repeat the same questions and concerns
- Wanting to do the same routines and ask to do things they would normally do

For more information or to connect with a Child Life Specialist, please visit: [http://ucdavis.health/childlife](http://ucdavis.health/childlife)