Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
Changes in sleep or eating patterns
Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
Worsening of chronic health problems
Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
Excessive worry or sadness
Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
Poor school performance or avoiding school
Difficulty with attention and concentration
Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
Unexplained headaches or body pain
Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

Everyone deals with stressful situations differently. Responses are usually shaped by prior experiences and our backgrounds this includes the community you live in. Keeping that in mind fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming for many of the families that we serve.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC)
Stress during an infectious disease outbreak can include:

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

For children and teens reaction is based on what they see from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers are calm and reassuring this supports children. Some changes that parents and caregivers should look for include:

- Excessive crying or irritation in younger children
- Returning to behaviors they have outgrown (for example, toileting accidents or bedwetting)
- Excessive worry or sadness
- Unhealthy eating or sleeping habits
- Irritability and “acting out” behaviors in teens
- Poor school performance or avoiding school
- Difficulty with attention and concentration
- Avoidance of activities enjoyed in the past
- Unexplained headaches or body pain
- Use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs
HOW TO HELP FAMILIES COPE WITH CRISIS

Some of the things you can do to help families is to encourage them to talk to their children about the COVID-19 outbreak. Some ideas are:

- Answer questions and share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.
- Reassure your child or teen that they are safe. Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Be a role model. Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.
- Allow children to be sad or cry.
- Let children talk, write, or draw pictures about the event and their feelings.
- Limit viewing of repetitive news reports about traumatic events. Young children may not understand that news coverage is about one event and not multiple similar events.
- Give extra attention to children who have trouble sleeping.
- Let them sleep with a light on or let them sleep in your room (for a short time).
- Try to keep your usual routines (or create new routines), such as reading bedtime stories, eating dinner together, or playing games.
- Help children feel in control when possible by letting them make decisions for themselves, such as choosing meals or picking out clothes.

Some ways community members can help children and adolescents:

- Offering their buildings and institutions as gathering places to promote support
- Helping families identify mental health professionals who can counsel children
- Helping children develop coping skills, problem-solving skills, and ways to deal with fear
- Holding parent meetings to discuss the event, their child’s response, and how parents can help their child
- Being sensitive to different cultural responses to trauma and stress

Additional Resources

https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/trauma-types/disasters
https://pcsearle.com/trauma-substance-abuse-teens/
https://californiahealthykids.net/resources

CONTACT A HEALTH PROFESSIONAL IF, AFTER A MONTH IN A SAFE ENVIRONMENT, CHILDREN ARE NOT ABLE TO PERFORM THEIR USUAL ROUTINES.
CONTACT A HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF NEW BEHAVIORAL OR EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS DEVELOP, PARTICULARLY IF THESE SYMPTOMS OCCUR FOR MORE THAN A FEW WEEKS:

FLASHBACKS (FLASHBACKS ARE THE MIND RELIVING THE EVENT)
A RACING HEART AND SWEATING
BEING EASILY STARTLED
BEING EMOTIONALLY NUMB
BEING VERY SAD OR DEPRESSED

CALL 800-985-5990.
SPANISH SPEAKERS CAN CALL 800-985-5990 AND PRESS 2.
THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING CAN CONTACT THE HELPLINE VIA TTY AT 800-846-8517.
TEXT "TALKWITHUS" TO 66746.
SPANISH SPEAKERS IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES CAN TEXT "HABLANOS" TO 66746.