

*So your Child has been
in an Accident...*



*An Information Booklet for
Parents*

As accidents are never expected and can sometimes be quite a shock, it is possible that you and your child are currently experiencing some strong reactions – and you may be finding yourself wondering:

- **“What is a normal reaction to such an event?”**
- **“How long will these feelings last?”**
- **“Will my child be okay?”**
- **“What is helpful in such a situation, and what is not so helpful?”**

If so, these are common questions after such an event, and this booklet aims to provide you with some answers.



What is a "Normal" reaction to such an event?

- There is a *wide range* of responses a child can have to a stressful event; however there are some reactions that commonly occur following a stressful event.

- Examples of some common responses include:

- **Emotional effects** – irritability, feeling helpless, fearful or sad.
- **Physical effects** – tiredness, difficulty sleeping, alertness, bodily complaints, decreased appetite.
- **Cognitive effects** – difficulty concentrating (for example – trouble with school work), forgetfulness, worry, thoughts about the event that "pop-up" at unexpected times, nightmares about the event.
- **Interpersonal effects** – not wanting to be with people as much as before, or being afraid to be alone.

- Although some of these reactions may seem unusual, all of the above responses are considered to be a normal response to an abnormal event.

- Positive outcomes are also common after such events – for example, people learn just how effectively they can deal with a crisis, and many find that they grow even closer together.



How long do such reactions last, and will my child be okay?

- For the vast majority of children, any reactions to the event will be brief.
- Even if your child seemed to have had quite an “extreme” reaction to the event at the beginning, these symptoms rarely become chronic problems.



- However, sometimes it takes longer for children to come to terms with what has happened, and in this case it may take several months for them to adjust.
- Also, a small minority of children show longer lasting reactions and may eventually need some help adjusting to the event (if this is the case, we have provided some useful contacts for you at the back of the booklet).



- Look after yourself; it has probably been very stressful for you as well – make time to *relax*.

- Accept your child's feelings and reactions as *normal*.

- Let your child know that it's normal to feel distressed after something bad or scary happens.

- Accept that there are many *different* ways people deal with the experience of an accident.

Also Try to...



- Allow your child to *express* any thoughts, feeling and reactions they have about the accident.

- Continue to provide love and *support* to your child.

- Accept assistance from *supportive persons* if needed; try to work together as a family.

- Return back to *normal routines* as much as possible.

Try not to...



- Try not to be *surprised* if you or your child feels distressed at first.

- Try not to think that there is a “*right*” way to react, think or feel about such events; everyone is different.

Useful Contact Information



- Your local GP.
- The school counsellor.



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