

All of us today are coping with a tremendous amount of insecurity and fear. The threats of renewed terrorist attacks, preparing for war and the state of the economy have us all on edge. Our assumptions about safety and security are now challenged. How can we identify the signs of trauma in ourselves and in our children? Some factors concern the event itself and our reactions to it:

How traumatic was/is the event? If you lived or worked in NY. If you knew someone on the plane or working in the WTC—chances are you were more deeply effected than others. If you have someone going off to war, your chances of being effected are also greater. If your main provider has lost a job sue to the state of the economy, you and your children will be more deeply effected.

What was your reaction to the event itself? When it happened, did you or child react with hysteria and panic? Are you feeling panic now—constantly worrying about chemical warfare or being the victim of terrorism? Voicing panic over finances or constant worry over someone who's part of the war on terrorism.

Personal factors also affect vulnerability to stress.

*Children feeling safe within the family are more like to be able to cope with stress. Children who see caregivers worried and afraid will perceive the threat as more frightening

*If a child was depressed and anxious before the events, they are likely to be more so in the present.

*Young children may be protected by not understanding the threat. However, once youngsters perceive a threat they are more like to experience severe stress reactions

*Children who have been previously traumatized are more likely to experience severe stress reactions now.

The main symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are:

Re-Experiencing—repeatedly acting out what happened when playing with toys or having many distressing dreams about terrorists.

Avoidance—Avoid all information about the events. Withdrawing from other people or having difficulty with positive emotions.

Increased “arousal” - Having difficulty falling or staying asleep. Being irritable and quick to anger, unable to concentrate and startling easily.

What can I do as a parent?

Spend extra time with your children. Love them and hug them.

Listen to them **before you try to talk**. If they're reluctant to talk about themselves, ask how they think someone else is doing

Predict and Prepare—Talk to them about what you'll do if something happens. have a family disaster plan—how you'll get in touch and get back together.

Plant “emotional seeds” that express your confidence in their ability to handle whatever comes.

Don't forget your own emotional health – If you do not have the confidence that you can handle whatever comes, it is impossible to plant those seeds in your children. Get professional help if you feel the need, get a support group of others in the same situation, seek support from the religious institution of your choice, write your thoughts out in a journal. Join one of the citizen's groups preparing for disaster, like **KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!**

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