

Many children witness or are involved in violence especially in domestic situations. Even if they are not directly involved, a child may experience secondary trauma as a result of witnessing how their parent's or other members of the household or community have been affected.

As a first step to helping children recover it is important that we acknowledge the effects they may have experienced as a result of primary or secondary trauma. These may include:

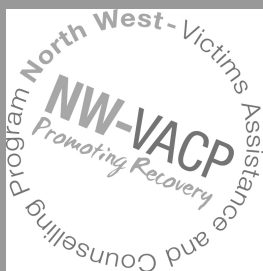
- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, shame or despair;
- Blaming themselves for what took place;
- Physical reactions such as stomach upsets, sleeping and eating difficulties, frequent illnesses, changes in toilet habits;
- Poor school performance;
- Difficulty relating to others;
- Changes in relationships perhaps becoming more outgoing, demanding, aggressive, uncommunicative, or withdrawn.

Some things we can do for children include:

- Being open, honest, clear and accurate (but without unnecessary detail);
- Encouraging them to express their emotions;
- Reassuring them about the future – let them know they are safe and will be cared for;
- Encouraging them to continue to be children – to play, explore, and laugh;
- Maintaining as much routine as possible – children need consistency and security;
- Trying to keep change to a minimum;
- Listening carefully to the child;
- Creating opportunities to just be together;
- Taking their concerns, complaints, and questions seriously;
- Looking after yourself – by caring for your own needs you create space so you can care for your child.

Children have their own ways of dealing with trauma according to personality and their stage of development. Often their response is not what may be expected and may not show up for some time. Adults need to provide understanding and allow children to experience things their own way.

If you are concerned about your child consider contacting a local family support service (contact your local Community Information Centre or Community Health Centre) or Parentline 132289.



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