

Common Reactions to Trauma – Children

(Adapted from Johnson in School Crisis Management, 1993)

<p><u>Ages 1-5</u> Bedwetting Thumb sucking Repetitive play; re-enacting trauma Anxious attachment, clinging Aggression/disobedience</p> <p><u>Ages 6-11</u> Anxious attachment, clinging Regression to outgrown habits Competition with siblings Repetitive talking, re-enacting trauma Disobedience Decline in school performance</p> <p><u>Ages 12-18</u> Can't meet responsibilities Resumes earlier coping styles Withdraws socially, interpersonal problems Self-critical Breaks rules, defies authority Abuses alcohol/drugs Decline in school performance Sudden changes in attitudes, personality</p>	<p><u>Ages 1-5</u> Nervous, anxious, worried Separation anxiety Fearful of reminders Panicked/hysterical Irritable Numb</p> <p><u>Ages 6-11</u> Fear of recurrence Wanting to be fed, dressed Afraid of going to school Aggression Overly concerned for family's safety Anger, hostility, belligerence Apathy, withdrawal Guilt Sad</p> <p><u>Ages 12-18</u> Angry, hostile, belligerent Guilt Sad Anxious Apathetic</p>	<p><u>Ages 1-5</u> Loss of appetite Pale appearance Overeating Bowel/bladder problems Sleep disturbances Nightmares</p> <p><u>Ages 6-11</u> Complaints about vision Complaints about stomach problems Headaches Pale appearance Itching Sleep disturbances</p> <p><u>Ages 12-18</u> Headaches Vague complaints/pain Skin rashes Loss of appetite or overeating</p>	<p><u>Ages 1-5</u> Shorter attention span Confusion regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event • Locations • Sequencing • Death </p> <p><u>Ages 6-11</u> Confusion regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event • Sequencing Inability to concentrate</p> <p><u>Ages 12-18</u> Problems concentrating Over concern re: health Not wanting to think about painful emotions</p>
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Note to Parents/Adult Caregivers: This list is to give you a better understanding of what children may experience after a trauma. Most of these common reactions will gradually get better. If reactions get worse or persist, consult with a trained counselor. For further tips, see Helping Children in the Midst of Crisis (7.8)