Supportive Perspectives for Children and Families Under Stress

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Something microscopic is bringing our world to its knees
As the Coronavirus forces us to change the way we interact and engage in the world, adults and children alike are likely to experience stress, anxiety, and potential trauma.

However, opportunities exist to recognize stress early and put safeguards in place to nourish our minds and souls with creative outlets.
Participants will:

* Understand what trauma is and learn symptoms and behaviors that might result after experiencing trauma
* Understand specific child reactions to stress and learn symptoms and behaviors that might result after a child experiences trauma
* View artwork of children and adults with certain types of anxiety and PTSD
* Learn how art can be an important outlet for young children and adults as they cope with stress
* Develop transformative strategies to help build resiliency and create community
At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force

*When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters
*When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities

Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning

**Psychological trauma is an affliction of the powerless**
PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of life-threatening events such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or violent personal assaults, like rape.

People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life.
* recurring thoughts or nightmares about the event
* trouble sleeping and/or changes in appetite
* increased anxiety, fear and vigilance
* overwhelming depression and low energy
* memory lapses
* feeling “scattered” or numb and unable to focus on work or daily activities
* an inability to face certain aspects of the trauma and avoidance of reminders of the event

Symptoms & Behaviors Related to PTSD
There are specific characteristics related to how a child experiences trauma, which are distinct from the manner in which trauma is experienced by adults:

Terr (1991) has classified a single incident trauma as a *Type I* trauma:

*Children may have full detailed memories because they are witnessing the event with more innocence and less preconceptions than adults*

*At the same time, specific to their level of cognitive development, children may have inaccurate perceptions in their memories as they try to gain some mastery of the experience in retrospect and attempt to psychologically redo the event to make things right again*
* strongly visualized or otherwise repeatedly perceived memories
* repetitive behaviors
* trauma specific fears, and changed attitudes about people, aspects of life, and the future
* regression to earlier behavior, such as thumb sucking, bed-wetting or clinging behavior
* reluctance to go to bed because of nightmares and fears
* fantasies that the disaster never happened
* crying, screaming or withdrawal
* refusal to attend and problems at school
* inability to concentrate

Some behaviors manifested in children with PTSD
In order to explain the aftereffects of trauma that will make the most sense in our current situation, I am focusing on specific one-incidence situations of shared trauma:

* Natural disaster
* September 11, 2001
To deal with her needs during the three weeks after the 1996 California earthquake, the author created a series of small collages. They were useful in helping her:

• deal with the nervousness and edginess she felt going to work at the epicenter each day
• negotiate the impact of seeing the damage created, and the seemingly endless road winding through two dust-fed valleys between home and work
One of her patients, a man with chronic mental illness, drew a cracked road. He depends on routine and repetition to function effectively from day to day and often uses the metaphor of a road in his artwork to show where he is in his journey. After the earthquake, his road was drawn with an enormous break. He said the break represents road damage and the interruption to his life and the chaos produced by this disruption from his regular routine.
September 11, 2001

The Children’s Museum of the Arts
*Operation Healing
*School Arts Rescue Initiative
Many adults reported the eerie view of only one tower standing.
Mandalas can be very centering and calming. 

Teens and Tweens
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The Sari Protocol for preschool
1 Curriculum-based theme: numbers and letters
2 Curriculum-based theme: shapes and colors
3 Who am I? personal identity
4 This is my family
5 This is my culture
6 This is my neighborhood
7 This is my school and how I learn
8 When bad things happen
9 When I think about the future
10 I am proud of my art

School Arts Rescue Initiative
* Give yourself permission to grieve
* Focus on your strengths and skills
* Ask for support and help from your family, friends, place of worship or other community resources
* Join or develop support groups
* Redefine your priorities and focus your energy and resources on those priorities
* Set small realistic goals to help tackle obstacles
* Reestablish daily routines for yourself and family
* Clarify feelings and assumptions about your partner
* Get enough rest and eat healthy meals and exercise
* Get enough rest to increase your reserve strength
* Acknowledge unresolved issues and use the hurt and pain as a motivator to make the necessary changes to heal
* Continue to educate yourself and your family about normal reactions to disaster
* Talk to your children
* Be supportive
* Set an example by expressing your feelings and showing problem solving skills in dealing with family problems

Helping parents/families cope with PTSD
Create community—observe traditions and make new ones

Find meaning through the day’s work—keep a schedule

Make art and music together; dance and sing

Apply strategies to support one’s personal life

Transforming Strategies
Lighten the mood whenever possible and appropriate

Plush Giant Microbes might do just that!!
Suggested Readings


