

# Adolescents and Trauma



- Adolescents exposed to trauma are likely to show signs of stress.
- There are several warning signs when adolescents should seek professional help.
- Parents and caregivers can help in many ways.

Adolescents exposed to trauma such as violence, death, accidents, or disasters are likely to show signs of stress. Adolescents are likely to exhibit some of the following symptoms. If symptoms do not decrease in severity after a few weeks you are encouraged to seek professional assistance.

## Common Adolescents Reactions

- Nightmares and night terror
- Nervous behavior
- Worry over safety of loved ones
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Physical complaints
- Changes in eating or sleeping
- Withdrawal and isolation
- Poor concentration
- Suppression of emotion
- Anger or rage
- Risk-taking behavior
- Substance abuse
- Talk of retaliation
- Shifts in peer group
- Focus on death
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Increased sense of alienation

## Warning Signs: When to Seek Professional Help

- Any substance use or abuse
- Extended periods of depression
- Ongoing loss of interest in daily activities
- Acting much younger for extended periods
- Excessive imitating of the dead person
- Statements about or acts of self harm
- Ongoing wish to join the dead person
- Withdrawal from friends
- Sharp drop in school performance
- Refusal to attend school or major events
- Dramatic change in eating and/or sleeping
- Violent or threatening behavior



Wheeler

**CONNECTICUT  
Clearinghouse**

a program of the Connecticut Center  
for Prevention, Wellness and Recovery

**800.232.4424 (phone)**

**860.793.9813 (fax)**

**[www.ctclearinghouse.org](http://www.ctclearinghouse.org)**

A Library and Resource Center on Alcohol, Tobacco, Other Drugs, Mental Health and Wellness

### Parents and caregivers can help

- Provide assurance that he/she is protected
- Offer support as they interpret the events
- Be direct and give honest information
- Be tolerant of symptoms of stress reactions
- Watch for and correct his/her self-blame
- Be available and encourage questions
- Develop and/or review safety plans
- Encourage healthy ways to cope
- Acknowledge normal feelings and reaction
- Help identify, label and express feelings



## Connecticut Resources

Department of Mental Health  
and Addiction Services  
[www.ct.gov/dmhas](http://www.ct.gov/dmhas)

Connecticut Network of Care  
for Behavioral Health  
[www.networkofcare.org](http://www.networkofcare.org)

Emergency Mobile  
Psychiatric Services  
[www.empst.org](http://www.empst.org)

Infoline 2-1-1  
[www.infoline.org](http://www.infoline.org)

## National Resources

The National Child Traumatic  
Stress Network  
[www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

Substance Abuse and Mental  
Health Services Administration  
[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

National Center for PTSD  
[www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp)

