



Tips for Caregivers on Media Coverage of Upsetting Events

Understanding Media Exposure

- Media coverage surrounding upsetting events can produce increased fears and anxiety in children.
- Very young children may not understand that the coverage and repetition of images from a past event are just that—a replay. They may worry and fear that the event is happening again.
- Exposure to the media coverage of an upsetting event may interfere with children's recovery after an event.
- Children who were directly impacted by an event (e.g., stores looted, family member injured or witnessed the event) are most vulnerable to negative effects from media exposure.

What Parents Can Do to Help

- **Make a Family Plan.** Consider putting some limits on children's exposure to media coverage of an upsetting event. The younger the child, the less exposure s/he should have. Consider if media exposure is necessary at all for a very young child. If a child is watching media, it should be with an adult who can monitor what the child sees and hears. Be sure your family has time away from media coverage for other activities.
- **Watch and Discuss with Children.** Let your child take the lead in bringing up what they saw or heard or experienced. Take the time to answer questions in words they can easily understand. Young children have difficulty understanding what they are seeing and hearing. Discussion can help to get a better sense of their thoughts, fears and concerns, and understanding their point of view.
- **Make Time for Fun.** Make time for your children to participate in fun activities with family and friends.
- **Monitor Adult Conversations.** It is important for you to monitor your adult conversations related to the upsetting events and coverage. Overhearing adult conversations may increase worries and fears related to the event and lead to further confusion and distress. When you need to talk about the event with another adult, have the conversation in a place where children cannot hear you.