

GETTING THROUGH THE HARD TIMES



Traumatic events can happen to anyone without warning. In an interconnected world we hear about disaster and trauma all the time. In Canterbury we have had our fair share of events that were difficult to deal with, caused strong emotional responses for most people but also a sense of numbness for some. Sometimes it is difficult to know how to respond to life changing events that we or others near us experience.

The most important thing to remember is that we can ask for support and that feeling confused or upset is a normal response.

Going through a shock takes a toll on all of us and coping is not always easy. Good mental health helps us carry on, bounce back and deal with all that life throws at us. During earthquakes and other scary or surprising events, our brains react chemically – releasing adrenaline.

This response is our natural alarm system – our body telling us to be alert and ready for action. It's there to help us, but afterwards we can feel shaky, queasy or on-edge, and it can make it hard for us to concentrate.

This is normal and we can help ease these affects to settle by doing some light physical activity, taking up a small chore or task and by focusing on some calm breathing for 10 seconds. It's ok to take a break from the news and social media so you can focus on other things – doing so doesn't belittle the event but it can help you to calm your nerves. It's also a great idea to connect with friends and loved ones.

Supporting our children and whānau

Parents, children will look for guidance from adults — so if you are okay, they'll be okay too...

- Be mindful how much 'worry' you are displaying, just be as cool as you can!
- Keep them away from the media.
- Answer their questions pretty matter of fact and in very 'general' terms. Drama it down. You do not have to get the answers exactly right here. Ensure you talk too about the police and how they did a really good job of keeping us safe. Keep the reassurance low key too — over-reassuring can make us think we need to be worrying more than we are!
- Let them talk about it, but do not let it 'take over' - use distraction to keep their mind off it - we've got the board games out!
- If your children (or you!) are a bit panicky, take those long deep breaths. In the words of our good friends at The Worry Bug: "Reassure them that the world has not changed, this is an unusual situation and things will go back to normal soon. When you listen, you do not need to solve, you just need to listen and be empathic. Feelings usually retreat after a short while if they are listened to and acknowledged."

For parents of teens...

- Try and keep them off or away from the social media as much as you can, but it's okay if they need to have it on tap right now - it's a great way for them to be checking in with friends and supporting each other.
- Let them know there's a lot of hype out there.
- Say that you are sticking with credible sources of information as they report only the things released by the police and people 'informed'. If they are really affected by this 'hype' tell them it's time to put the phone down or away. Keep the reassurance low key too.
- Stick to your normal routines as much as you can.

You've got this!

Source: **The Allright Campaign**



Helpful Resources

Below are a few articles which you may find helpful when talking to your child about a traumatic event.

[How to talk to Kids and Teens About World Trauma](#) on Hey Sigmund.

[Tips for coping with a disaster](#) by All right? Healthy Christchurch initiative led by the Canterbury District Health Board and the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand.

[How to talk to your kids about: Trauma](#) by The Parenting Place

[Q&A with Neuroscientist Nathan Wallis on stuff.co.nz](#)

[How to talk to children about terrorism](#) by The Conversation

Who to contact?

If you have any concerns regarding your child, or require any support from us, please contact any of the following

- The CBHS Guidance Team – gui@teams.cbhs.school.nz
- Year Level Dean

You may also find some information below useful at this time:

- Need to talk? Free call or text 1737 for support from a trained counsellor.
- **Youthline** 0800 376 633, free text 234 or email talk@youthline.co.nz or **online chat**.

- **Commonground** resource for parents, family, whanau and friends with information, tools and support to help a young person who is struggling.
- **Skylight** 0800 299 100 for support through trauma, loss and grief; 9am–5pm weekdays.