



The following tips are designed to help parents and carers to support children and young people following a traumatic event.

Following a traumatic event, such as bereavement, children and young people might have questions or concerns; they might have emotions such as shock and distress.

- **Remember that everyone is different and reacts differently**

Everyone responds differently following a traumatic event, whether this is a bereavement or another distressing situation; at Just 'B' we encourage parents to be prepared and flexible enough to deal with a range of emotional reactions. This might be anger, fear or anxiety, children and young people might cry, have questions or might not want to talk about it at all.

- **Help your child or young person to understand that what they are feeling is normal**

When people experience a trauma or hear about a traumatic event they might be overwhelmed with emotions, have questions or worries, or be empathising with the people affected by the event. As a parent or carer it is important to reassure children and young people that what they are feeling is normal. At Just 'B' we would encourage parents to create a safe space where the child can share their thoughts, and where they know their feelings will be taken seriously.

- **Let them know you're there for them now, or whenever they feel ready**

Ask the child or young person how they are feeling, but prepare for the fact that they might not want to talk; they might be in shock and it could take days or weeks for them to process the situation. Let them know they can come to you at any time. If they are struggling to express themselves, they might find it easier to use a different medium like writing their feelings down or drawing.

- **Be led by what the child or young person feels comfortable with**

People respond to distress in different ways – and this is true of children and young people: they might want to have some time alone, or they might want to spend more time with you or have more regular contact. At Just 'B' we would say that it is important to be led by the individual child and what they feel is right for them.

- **Support them in their sadness and be open to their distress**

We can't stop the pain that children and young people are experiencing, but parents, carers and people close to them can support their sadness and be open to their distress – it might be sitting alongside them, offering comfort, and it might be listening or talking through their questions or concerns.

When someone we love is in distress, we instinctively want to fix it and make things better. But often we can't fix things, which can make us feel helpless. However, rather than trying to fix it, the best thing we can do to support that child or young person is being there with them and listening.

Just 'B' Bereavement Support is one of the services provided by Saint Michael's Hospice, Harrogate.