



# Tips on supporting young people

Notes on using these tips: Use and share with parents and teachers to help support toddlers affected by a traumatic incident. Source: Psychological First Aid Operations Guide, 2006. [http://ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/manuals/PFA\\_2ndEditionwithappendices.pdf](http://ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/manuals/PFA_2ndEditionwithappendices.pdf)

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Detachment, shame and guilt.	Provide a safe time to discuss with your teen the mining accident and their feelings. Emphasise that these feelings are common, and correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done.	Support young people to recognise that everything possible has been done and that families could not do any more.
Self-consciousness about their fears, sense of vulnerability, fear of being labelled abnormal.	Help teens understand that these feelings are common. Encourage relationships with family/whānau and peers for needed support during the recovery period.	Say: 'I was feeling the same thing. Scared and helpless. Most people feel like this when an event happens, even if they look calm on the outside.'  "Why don't you see if you can get hold of Pete to see how he's doing? And thanks for playing the game with your little sister. She's much better now'.
Acting out behaviour. Using alcohol and drugs, sexual acting out, accident-prone behaviour.	Help teens understand that acting out behaviour is a dangerous way to express strong feelings (like anger) over what happened. Limit access to alcohol and drugs. Talk about the danger of high-risk sexual activity. Have them let you know where they are going and what they're planning to do.	Say: 'Many teens and some adults feel out of control and angry after an event like this. They think drinking or taking drugs will help somehow. It's very normal to feel that way, but it's not a good idea to act on it. It's important during these times that I know where you are and how to contact you'. Assure your teen that this extra checking in is temporary, just until things have stabilised.
Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders.	Help to identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and to clarify the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it. Explain to teens that media coverage of the event can trigger fears of it happening again.	Say: 'When you remember what has happened and feel upset you might try saying to yourself, ' <i>I am upset now because I am thinking about what has happened but I know I will feel better soon</i> '. Repeatedly watching the news reports will make it worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?' Talk your young person some ideas about other activities.

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Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships. Teens may pull away from parents, family/whānau and even from peers. They may respond strongly to parent's reactions in the crisis.	Explain that the strain on relationships is expectable. Emphasise that we need family/whānau and friends for support during the recovery period. Encourage tolerance for different family/whānau members' courses to recovery. Accept responsibility for your own feelings.	Spend more time talking as a family/whānau about how everyone is doing. Say: 'You know, the fact that we're crabby with each other is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling things amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other'. You might say: 'I appreciate you being calm when your brother was screaming last night. I know he woke you up too. I want to apologise for being irritable with you yesterday. I am going to work harder to stay calm myself.'
Radical changes in attitude.	Explain that changes in people's attitudes after an event are common, but will return to normal over time.	'We are all under great stress. When people's lives are disrupted this way, we all feel more scared, angry and, even, full of revenge. It might not seem like it, but we all will feel better when we get back to a more structured routine'.
Wanting premature entrance into adulthood (eg, wanting to leave school, get married).	Encourage postponing major life decisions. Find other ways to make the adolescent feel more in control over things.	'I know you're thinking about quitting school and getting a job to help out. But it's important not to make big decisions right now. A crisis time is not a great time to make major changes'.
Concern for other victims and families/whānau.	Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not burden with undue responsibility.	Help teens to identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful eg helping with some baking, offering support with babysitting,