



## **PFA video handout 3. Advice to parents.**

### **Especially for parents with young children**

- Try to keep up or re-establish daily routines like preparing meals, going to school, doing daily chores etc. Let your children take part in family routines.
- Don't introduce changes such as new routines or stricter standards of behaviour. Leave that for another time.
- Exercise and other physical activity make everyone feel better.
- Make sure your children get enough rest and sleep.
- Allow your children to engage in activities like drawing and encourage them to play with other children.
- Try to maintain contact with family and friends. It can support and comfort you and your child.
- Many children need more physical contact, hugs and cuddling.
- Don't leave young children alone or with people that the child does not know well.
- Talk about your feelings in an appropriate way and allow your children to talk about theirs.
- Give your child a sense of control over his or her life. Even minor decisions, such as allowing him or her to choose between two different kinds of food, make the child feel more in control.
- Protect against disturbing reminders. Intervene if an activity makes your child upset or anxious. For example, stop watching a television show that reminds the child of the trauma or promotes feelings of worry, alarm or fear.
- As the parents and care-givers, you are the most important people in the children's lives. Be patient with yourself and be reassured that most children return to their own usual self after some time.

### **Especially for parents with older children**

- Try to keep up or re-establish daily routines like preparing meals, going to school, doing daily chores etc. Let your children take part in family routines.
- Encourage your child to continue his or her education and work if at all possible.
- Maintain family roles if you can. For example, don't insist that your child takes on more responsibility than usual or expect them to meet the emotional needs of a distressed parent.



- Reassure your children that the event is over and they are safe, but only if this is the case. You may have to reassure them over and over again.
- Listen to your child. Take his or her concerns and feelings seriously.
- Talk. Tell your children about what happened in a way that is appropriate to their level of understanding and without going into frightening and lurid detail. Use language they understand. If you keep accurate information from them, they will 'fill in the blanks' using their experience, available information and their imagination.
- Talk to your children about how people may react to distress. Tell them their feelings are normal under these circumstances and reassure them that they will gradually feel better.
- Exercise and other physical activities make everyone feel better. Allow children to engage in activities like sports and youth clubs. Make sure your child knows that it is all right to have fun.
- Make sure your child gets enough rest and sleep.
- Allow your child to spend time with friends and family.
- There may be relevant tasks in the response or community support that your child can contribute to. Helping others is helpful.
- Talk about your feelings in an appropriate way and allow your children to talk about their feelings.
- Give your child a sense of control over his or her life. Even minor decisions such as allowing him or her to choose between two options give a sense of control.
- Be understanding. Recognize that changes in behavior, such as mood swings, may be the way your child reacts to distressing or frightening events.