<table>
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<th>Healthcare Providers’ Guide to Traumatic Stress in Ill or Injured Children</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Assess and manage pain.</td>
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<td>• Ask about fears and worries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consider grief and loss.</td>
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<td>• Who and what does the patient need now?</td>
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<td>• Barriers to mobilizing existing supports?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assess parents’ or siblings’ and others’ distress.</td>
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For other helpful tools, please visit us at www.healthcaretoolbox.org.
How to Assess: Distress

Pain. Use your hospital’s pediatric pain assessment. Ask:
• How is your pain right now?
• What was your worst pain since this happened?

Fears and worries. Ask:
• Sometimes, kids get upset when something like this happens. What has been scary or upsetting for you?
• What worries you the most?

Grief or loss. Ask:
• Was anyone else hurt or ill?
• Have you had other recent losses? (home, pet, etc.)
How to Help: Distress
TIPS TO HELP FAMILIES OF INJURED OR ILL CHILDREN

1 Provide child with as much control as possible.
   • Help the child understand what is happening.
   • Allow the child to have a say in what will happen next.

2 Actively assess and treat the child’s pain.
   • Use your hospital’s pain management protocol.
   • Teach child and parent basic coping techniques.

3 Provide accurate information, using basic words.
   • Ask the child to repeat back explanations.
   • Listen carefully and clarify misconceptions.

4 Provide reassurance and realistic hope.
   • Describe what is being done to help the child feel better.
   • Address the child’s concerns or worries.
How to Assess: Emotional Support
TRAUMATIC STRESS IN ILL OR INJURED CHILDREN

What does the child need now?
- Parents: What helps your child cope when upset/scared?
- Child: What helps you feel better when you are upset/scared?

Who is available to help the child?
- Do parents understand the illness/injury or treatment?
- Can they be with their child during procedures?
- Can they help calm/soothe their child?

What are the barriers to mobilizing parent support?
- Do parents’ responses make it harder for them to help?
- How confident is the parent in caring for the child?
How to Help: Emotional Support
TIPS TO HELP FAMILIES OF INJURED OR ILL CHILDREN

1. **Listen to parents and encourage their presence.**
   - Ask parents for their expertise about their child.
   - Ask parents about their concerns.
   - Encourage them to be with their child.

2. **Empower parents to help their child.**
   - Suggest ways they can help their child.
   - Involve them in physical care, as appropriate.
   - Help them seek out support if upset/anxious.

3. **Encourage child/parent involvement in “normal” activities.**
   - Suggest activities that fit the child’s medical status.
   - Find activities that the child and parent can do together.
   - Promote contact with the child’s friends and teachers.
Assess distress of parents/family members. Ask:
• How is your family coping right now?
• Who is having an especially difficult time?

Gauge family stressors and resources. Ask:
• Are you eating, getting sleep, and taking breaks?
• Do you have friends who can help out at home?

Address other needs (beyond medical). Ask:
• Are there other stressors going on (such as money, job, transportation) that make it particularly difficult right now?
1. **Encourage parents’ basic self-care.**
   - Encourage parents to sleep, eat, and take breaks.
   - Help them enlist support of friends, family, and community.

2. **Remember other family members’ needs.**
   - Involve siblings and explain treatment to them when possible.
   - Enlist hospital resources such as chaplain and social work as needed.

3. **Be sensitive to the cultural and resource needs of the family.**
   - Remember that outside issues can impact recovery.
   - Be open to involving other healing professionals and customs.
# How to Assess: Culturally Sensitive Trauma-Informed Care

### Questions Providers Should Ask

**LISTEN**

- For variations in understanding. Ask:
  - What is your understanding of what’s happened?
  - What is worrying you the most?
  - What does your family think about it?

**BE OPEN**

- To involving other professionals. Ask:
  - Who do you normally turn to for support?
  - Who else should be involved in helping your child?
  - Are you open to outside referrals and resources?

**RESPECT**

- Different communication practices. Ask:
  - Who typically makes the decisions about your child?
  - What information should be shared with your child?
  - Is there anyone else you would like me to talk to?
Families may attribute distress to culturally specific beliefs.

- Consider somatic/behavioral presentations of distress.
- Listen for and use the family’s own terms.
- Attend to distress in the way the family defines it.

Families may have distinct traditions for decision-making and communication.

- Ask about decision-making practices in advance.
- Respect parents’ wishes regarding what their child should know.
- Be open to involving other healing professionals and customs.

Families may be reluctant to seek help outside their cultural community.

- Connect families with community resources they trust.
- Be sensitive to the family’s fear about immigration and legal status.
- Show respect by working within and through the family structure.
For the Provider: Working with Traumatized Children and Families

**ABCs OF PROVIDER SELF-CARE**

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<tr>
<th>AWARENESS</th>
<th>BALANCE</th>
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<td>• Be aware of how you react to stress (overworking, overeating, etc.).</td>
<td>• Diversify tasks and take breaks during the workday.</td>
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<td>• Monitor your stressors and set limits with patients and colleagues.</td>
<td>• Eat sensibly, exercise regularly, and get enough sleep.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Talk to a professional if your stress affects your life or relationships.</td>
<td>• Engage in activities outside of work; use your vacation days.</td>
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<td>• Connect regularly with family, friends, and community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use meditation, prayer, or relaxation to connect with yourself.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• When not at work, disconnect from professional role and e-mail.</td>
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Adapted from Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996
Working with Traumatized Children and Families

Stress can happen to all of us.

• Working with traumatized families impacts seasoned providers.
• Exposure to others’ emotions and distress increases our stress.

Unmanaged stress can take a toll on you and your patients.

• Years of work experience will not inoculate you from stress.
• Unmanaged stress accumulates and erodes health and well-being.

Ill and injured children and families depend on your empathic engagement.

• In order to attend to your patients, you need to attend to yourself.
• Follow the same advice that you would give to your patients.

ABC – Three things providers can do to manage stress:
Monitor your reactions and be aware of changes.
Maintain balance in personal and work lives.
Stay connected to loved ones and trusted colleagues.

● Red Flags ●

✔ Changes in your beliefs or attitudes.
✔ Avoiding patients and co-workers.
✔ Too much/too little engagement at work.
✔ Decreased job/life satisfaction.