

# Helping Kids heal and recover from experiences of violence

- Many children experience or witness scary events that upset them, called Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- While ACEs are linked to increased risks for children, there are things you can do to help a child heal and recover. These are called Positive Childhood Experiences. When a child has these experiences, they are more likely to recover and go on to thrive as adults:
  - The ability to talk with family about feelings.
  - The sense that family is supportive during difficult times. The
  - enjoyment of participation in community traditions. Feeling a sense
  - of belonging in school.
  - Feeling supported by friends.
  - Having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely care. Feeling
  - safe and protected by an adult in the home.



## Do:

Return to or establish regular family routines – this helps kids to feel secure and know what to expect.

Establish clear expectations of behaviour. Validate the child's feelings and also remind them that some behaviours are not allowed.

Talk about what happened and help your child to find ways to express their feelings.

Allow them to use play and creative expression to process their thoughts and feelings.

Answer questions. Be sure to emphasise that they are not responsible and not to blame.

Read children's books regarding similar events to help them process their experience and learn additional ways to cope.

Provide reassurance and support. Let them know you are there to care of them and to keep them safe.

## Remember

Children will only process as much as their developmental understanding will allow them. They may need to revisit their experiences as they mature, to understand them in a new way.

They may need you to help them regulate their big feelings – stay calm even when they escalate.

Look after your own needs so you can remain calm and patient even though the child's behaviours and emotions can be harder to manage.

Asking for help is OK – sometimes it makes a difference to have a professional support you and/or your children to heal and recover.