

Suggestions for Parents of Children Who Have Traumatic Brain Injury¹

- Find ways to protect children from further harm and from further exposure to traumatic things. If possible, create a safe haven for them. Protect children from onlookers and the media covering the story.
- Reassure children and adolescents that the traumatic event was not their fault.
- Identify children in acute distress and stay with them until they begin to recover from it. Acute distress includes panic (marked by trembling, agitation, rambling speech, or not being able to speak.) Let children and adolescents know that it is normal to feel upset after something bad happens.
- If your children are fearful, reassure them that you love them and will take care of them. Stay together as a family as much as possible.
- Allow time for the youngsters to experience and talk about their feelings. At home, however, a gradual return to a normal routine can sometimes reassure the child.
- If behavior at bedtime is a problem, give the child extra time and reassurance. Let him or her sleep with a light on or in your room for a limited time if necessary.
- Do not criticize behavior that makes them act younger than they are or shame the child with words like "babyish".
- Allow children to cry or be sad. Don't expect them to be brave or tough. Be patient.
- Encourage children and adolescents to feel in control. Let them make some decisions about meals, what to wear, etc.
- Take care of yourself so you can take care of the children. Children will tire out easily, so build rest breaks into daily activities
- Keep a daily record of all activities, so the child can then refer to it later as a reminder to help them remember what they did that day.
- Try to decrease distractions, background noise and activity, and interruptions. Try and present the child with one thing or concept at a time, because too many ideas at once can cause confusion, and create a situation where the child cannot pay attention as well. The simpler the instruction or item, and the more separated it is from other ideas and instructions, etc. the less frustration the child will experience.

¹ University, Community, Leaders, and Individuals with Disabilities (UCLID) Center is an interdisciplinary leadership training program in developmental disabilities affiliated with the [University of Pittsburgh](#) and [Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh](#). UCLID faculty and students wrote these suggestions for helping those with special needs.