

# Dealing with trauma – how you can help your child cope

**Distress is an understandable and normal response to a disaster of the magnitude of the Indian Ocean tsunamis on Boxing Day.**

You, or your child, may be feeling anxious and in shock after having been at direct risk from the disaster or watching the devastating images on television.

These feelings of distress are an understandable and natural reaction to a disaster of this scale.

You can help re-establish your child's sense of safety, reassurance, self esteem and understanding.

- Try to avoid appearing anxious or frightened as your child will take emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives.
- Reassure your child that they are safe and point out things which help ensure their immediate safety.
- Remind your child that trustworthy people, like emergency workers, police, doctors and nurses are helping people who are hurt.
- Let your child know it's okay to be upset and that talking about their feelings is important.
- Keep an eye on your child's emotions by checking behaviour, appetite and sleeping patterns and how they express their concerns.
- Tell your child as much of the truth as you can otherwise they may think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening.
- Stick to the facts about what has happened, making sure you don't dwell on the scale or scope of the tragedy.
- Keep your explanations appropriate for your child's age and encourage them to talk through their thoughts and feelings.
- Explain to your child the sort of practical things that the community, Government and the rest of the world are doing to help people.

If you need someone to talk to call the Department for Community Development's Crisis Care Helpline 1800 199 008 or the Parenting Helpline on 1800 654 432.

For further information visit [www.community.wa.gov.au](http://www.community.wa.gov.au).

