POST CONFLICT PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN

By

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Trauma Involves Intense Feelings

- Pain
- Fear
- Shame
- Shock
- Disturbance
- Being Upset
- Helplessness
- Horror
Impact of Trauma on an Individual

- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Concentration difficulties
- Memory loss
- Shaking
- Headaches
- Angry
- Frightened
- Irritable
- Regress
- Safety questioning
- Spiritual questioning
- Substance abuse
Symptoms of Re-Experiencing

• Nightmares
• Flash backs
Symptoms of Avoidance

• Emotional numbing
• Avoiding talking about the events
• Avoiding thinking about the events
• Avoiding places that might remind the experience
• Social withdrawal
Symptoms of Hyperarousal

- Difficulty sleeping or staying asleep
- Easy outburst of anger
- Exaggerated startle response – jumpy
- Constantly on the look out for danger
- Generalised anxiety
- Abdominal pains, loose stool on getting afraid
Depression

- This is an emotional disorder. It is common in traumatised children.
  - Feeling persistently sad
  - Being irritable
  - Reduced interest in normal activities
  - Poor appetite, loss of weight
  - Poor sleep
  - Thoughts of wanting to die
  - Behaviour “problems”
Anxiety Disorders

- Constant fear
- Sweatiness
- Shaky hands
- Sweaty palms
- Rapid beating of heart
- Poor sleep
Behavior Changes

- Increased activity level
- Decreased concentration and/or attention
- Withdrawal
- Anger outbursts
- Aggression
- Absenteeism
General Effects of Trauma

- Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others, particularly of those that are "different"
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death and dying
Management of Trauma in children

• Sources of Support
  – Parents
  – Teachers
  – Therapist
  – Community
Management of Trauma in Children

• Repair needs to happen at “age” of trauma
Guidelines for Teachers

- Maintain a predictable class schedule and rules to provide support and consistency for the children.
- Listen to and tolerate your students’ retelling of events, as well as playing out the events.
- Schedule specific times for discussion and play during the school day to allow for opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings about the tragedy; however, set limits on scary or hurtful play.
Guidelines for Elementary School Teachers

- Encourage some distraction times, which would include doing school work that does not require high levels of new learning, as well as enjoyable activities.
- Expect and understand students' regression (acting younger) and other difficult behaviors that are not typical of the students.
- Maintain communication with other teachers, school personnel, and parents to monitor how the students are coping with the demands of school, home, and community activities.
Guidelines
for Elementary School Teachers

• Do classroom activities that will reinforce the message that one person can make a difference to help and heal

• Activities can include drawing pictures and sending cards or class projects of collecting bottle caps or aluminum cans

• Use simple, direct terms to describe what happened. Avoid terms designed to "soften" the information, which inadvertently further confuses children

• For example, use the term "died," rather than "went to sleep"
Guidelines for Parents of Elementary School Students

• Avoid exposing your child to reminders of the trauma
• This includes limiting your child's exposure to the news and other television programs about the tragedy
• If you do choose to have your child see this information on the television, keep it brief, watch it with your child, and talk to your child after to clarify miscommunication
• Protecting the children from re-exposure includes limiting exposure to adult conversations about the events - even when you think they are not listening, they often are
What else can we do for children?

- Therapist intervention
- Parental interventions
- Care givers/guardian's intervention
DEVELOPED TOOL
Help for children
“A place to talk”
This therapy-book is written in the context of animals in the jungle, struggling to find a leader; in the process they create a lot of conflict, destruction, violence and displacement.

- The Parrot is used as a symbol of talking that encourages the animals to talk about their feelings and to give and receive forgiveness.
- They finally find peace amongst themselves through talking.
• This book has no age limit. It is a guide to help children reflect on life’s events and feelings, to enhance expression of feelings and make talking possible... as a step towards healing.

• Many animals are used as an illustration of many communities that co-exist in African cultures.
• Helps reinforces conscious time for children to express themselves with support from guardians
• Helps children share what they feel is traumatising without being given a label of traumatised
• Gives safe space that children can use animal example as an entry point to their inner self
A place to talk

- Children express themselves well when doing something
- The book offers room to:
  - Reading
  - Painting
  - Acting
Where the book has been tested

- 7 different schools
- a total of 100 students
- Mainly affected areas in Nairobi and Mt. Elgon
- Private used in three families
Feedbacks on the book

• Families both children and adults felt relieved.
• One child said: “It feels like putting down the fire, that I have been holding in my hands.”
• A private counsellor felt supported by using the book in dealing with trauma at the family level.
• One parent reported that the book was a good entry level to talk as a family.
Challenges

• Dealing with in depth mental issues like PTSD and Depression
• We are creating awareness for parents and teachers to seek professional help where they are stuck
• Translation to various languages
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