

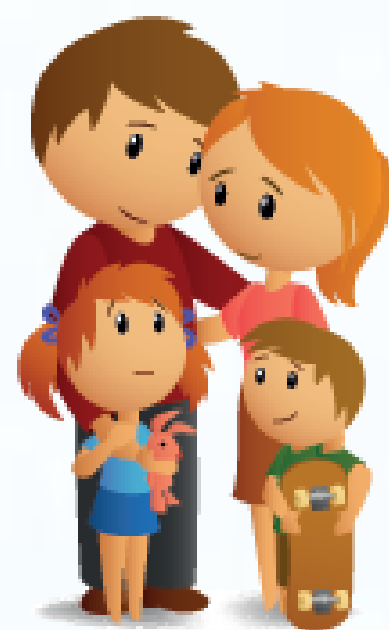
PARENTING SUPPORT FOR CAREGIVERS
OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY TRAUMA

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Caregivers play an essential role in helping their children and teens recover from trauma. However, parenting a child or teen struggling with posttraumatic stress can be challenging. Caregivers can feel isolated and misunderstood by others.

Many factors influence how caregivers provide care and support for the trauma recovery of their children and teenagers, such as their own history and exposure to adversities, experiences towards their child's trauma, their understanding of childhood trauma, as well as present day stressors.

Hence, providing the appropriate support to caregivers can enable them to better support the recovery of their children and teenagers.



6 WAYS TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS OF CHILDREN AFFECTED BY TRAUMA

1. Acknowledge and validate them

Learning about their child's trauma can be triggering for caregivers, especially when they have unhealed traumas of their own. They can also experience secondary trauma when learning about their child's experiences. Being understanding and validating of their feelings and their struggles can provide the encouragement they need to provide appropriate support for their child's recovery.

2. Build their understanding about Trauma and its impact on children and teens

The more informed caregivers are about trauma and the impact trauma can have on their child or teen, the more they can understand their child's or teen's moods and behaviours. With increased knowledge about trauma and how to respond to their child's or teen's posttraumatic stress reactions, caregivers are empowered and better prepared in helping their child or teen cope.

3. Help them understand that their child's PTSD-related difficulties are not personal

With increased knowledge and understanding about trauma, caregivers may be less likely to take their child's or teen's trauma-related behaviour personally. They will need support along the way to regulate their responses towards their child or teen. They can also do with gentle reminders that their child's or teen's trauma-related behaviors are not signs of their failure as parents.

4. Help them develop realistic expectations of their child and the relationship

Posttraumatic stress can be very destabilising for children or teens and their families. It is important to help caregivers develop realistic expectations of their child's moods, behaviours and abilities (in sports, music, academics, etc) while they are still in the process of healing from their trauma. This can enable a healthy, supportive parent-child/teen relationship.

5. Encourage celebration of successes, including the small ones!

It is helpful and encouraging for both caregivers and their child or teen to recognize the efforts and progress made in counselling/therapy. Trauma recovery is a challenging journey, so each step forward (including setbacks learnt) call for acknowledgement. Offering words of affirmation and praise to caregivers for their efforts is invaluable in keeping them going. It also models for them how they, too can offer these encouragements to their child or teen.

6. Encourage them to seek support and take care of themselves

Encourage them to ask about seeking additional resources and support from friends, family as well as professionals as they care for their child or teen. It is helpful for caregivers to know that taking care of their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health is crucial in being able to support their children and teens more effectively.

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