**Recommendations for caregivers to support children experiencing trauma**

- Some children will not want to be away from caregivers and have separation anxiety. Caregivers should provide comfort and support whenever possible and reassure the child they are safe and secure.

- Some children will need to talk about traumatic events. Some will not. Both responses are normal. It is important to not push your child to talk if they don’t want to. It is also important to let your child know you are there to listen when they are ready to talk.

- Anxiety from trauma can cause difficulty sleeping, trouble falling asleep, bad dreams, and other changes to sleep patterns. Anxiety can also cause stomach aches, headaches, and other physical complaints. It can be helpful to stick to bedtime routines and offer additional time for togetherness. If physical complaints persist, call your health care provider.

- Giving your child choices whenever possible helps them maintain a sense of control when their environment feels out of control. Choosing food, activities, and other age-appropriate options can be helpful.

- Children will still need structure and discipline. It helps them to feel safe to know that there are normal rules that still apply. Keeping daily routines whenever possible is important. Be consistent.

- Some children will react to trauma with anger. Some will respond with sadness or anxiety. Adults should be understanding and supportive allowing their child to express emotions. Help your child to label their emotions with words whenever possible. Help your child to cope with their emotions with comfort, affection, and support. **GRPS has a Behavioral Health Department with master’s level Therapists available to provide support to you and your child as needed.**

- It can be harmful to younger children to be exposed to repetitive media coverage of traumatic events. Try to limit social media and news coverage whenever possible. Older children may feel the need to stay informed. When possible, watch the news or social media with your child so you can help your child process what they are seeing and hearing.

- Caregivers should try take care of themselves and demonstrate the need for self-care.

There are professional supports available in our community such as:

**Network 180 at (616) 336-3909**

For assistance or additional resource, please contact the **GRPS Behavioral Health Department** at (616) 819-1773 or [Behavioralhealth@grps.org](mailto:Behavioralhealth@grps.org).