

Helping Children in the time of a Crisis

To assist you in this challenging time, we are providing you with valuable information below:

Allow your children time to express their feelings. Spend time talking to your children. Allow space for them to ask questions and express concerns. Journaling can be a great tool for helping your child express his/her feelings.

- **Let your children know it is all right to be upset when something scary or bad happens.** Allow children to own their feelings. Be a good listener. Normalize their feelings - i.e. "It totally makes sense that you would feel sad..." Remind children that people experience different types of emotions when hard situations like this happen and it is normal.
- **Take care of yourself.** You will be able to best support your children if you are getting the support and rest you need. Ask for help. Just as in an airplane, secure your oxygen mask first so you're better able to help your children. Allow us to care for your children during the school day, so you can attend to recovery and self-care.
- **Stay calm.** Your children are observing your reactions and coping strategies to see how you respond to life. Stress is a learned reaction, and children can absorb adult stress. Role model balanced emotions. Children model what they observe and will benefit from adults who can help them learn how to cope effectively.
- **Create routine as much as possible.** Children feel safety with predictability. Allow us to be part of that predictability.
- **Facilitate ways for your children to support and help those in need.** Ask your children how they would like to help others. Reaching out to and supporting others can be an antidote to sadness/depression. It plays a huge role in the recovery process after a traumatic event. Children can write letters or draw pictures for those who lost their homes or the first responders who helped our community in significant ways.
- **Emphasize your children's resiliency.** Children are rather resilient. Focus on their competencies. Help children identify what they have done in the past that helped them cope whenever they were frightened or upset.
- **Reassure your children that they are safe now.** There are many people working to restore our community. Reiterate (as often as needed) that Houston has come together now as a caring and helpful community to help one another. Remind your children how we can take pride in the compassion being demonstrated in our city.
- **Limit media exposure.** Children tend to internalize the images and sounds, resulting in excess fear.
- **Reach out for help if you need it.** Let your school counselor know if your child seems distressed (detached, irritable, moody, tearful, unusually quiet, trouble concentrating/eating/sleeping, late assignments).

The most effective way we can help our children is to make sure they feel connected, genuinely cared for and loved.