

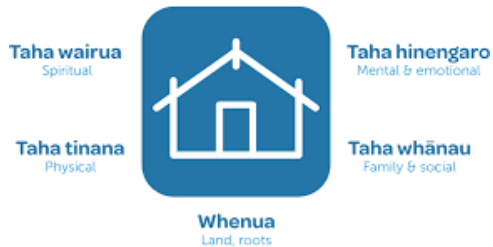
Parents/caregivers feelings

Often parents/ caregivers have a lot of feelings and reactions to the frightening event as well.

Feelings of guilt – It is really common to feel guilt about not being able to prevent or protect your loved one from a frightening event. Remember it was an accident. A lot of people have ‘What if I...’ thoughts. It can sometimes be difficult to be kind and forgiving towards yourself. It might help to think of what you would tell a friend in the same situation.

You may also have trauma reactions yourself – It might help to talk to friends or whaanau you trust. You may find comfort through your community, marae or place of worship. For some comfort is found in places, people and activities that soothe and heal **Wairua** (spiritual wellbeing).

Te Whare Tapa Whā



Helpful Websites and links to apps:

- www.kidshealth.org.nz/trauma-how-talk-your-kids-about
- www.kidshealth.org.nz/online-tools-support-mental-wellbeing
- www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma
- mentalhealth.org.nz/te-oranga-hinengaro

Where to get extra help:

If you or your child are still having nightmares, flashbacks, or strong and overwhelming feelings after 3-4 weeks have passed, please seek help from the services below:

- Contact your regional burns unit to access advice about local services.
- **Your family GP** can help arrange counselling and additional support.
- **(Need to talk)** Call or text **1737** – this is a free phone counselling service that runs 24 hours, 7 days a week.
- **ACC counsellor** – if you have a physical injury, or have experienced abuse, you may be able to access counselling through ACC. Your GP can refer you.

Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora

Supporting tamariki/children
after a traumatic or
frightening events.



Paediatric Consult Liaison Team
Psychological Medicine
Kidz First Children's Hospital
Middlemore Hospital/National Burn Centre

Common reactions to frightening events

Most tamariki and rangatahi (children and teens) show changes to their emotions, actions and body after a distressing or frightening event.

Reactions can include:

- ❖ Nightmares & flashbacks
- ❖ Sleep problems
- ❖ Worry & fear
- ❖ Irritability
- ❖ Withdrawal
- ❖ Jumpiness
- ❖ Difficulty concentrating
- ❖ Feelings of guilt
- ❖ Acting younger & clingy
- ❖ Avoiding reminders of the event
- ❖ Physical aches & pains

Often these reactions will improve by themselves over time and sometimes extra support may be helpful.

What can help?



Aroha – Hugs and attention.

Relationships with **Whaanau** (family and loved ones) are key to healing the **Tinana** (body) and **Hinengaro** (mind/emotions). Some tamariki (children) might need more time and attention. Comforting them with a favorite book or waiata (song) might help them feel close to you. If they are older they may like to listen to music or watch videos. Older rangatahi may not want comfort in the same way as younger tamariki.



Koorero/Whakarongo –Talk and listen.

Talking helps some people make sense of what happened, so they can feel less alone with their worries and fears. Give them time and try not to push them to talk if they don't want to. Listening, answering questions honestly and providing reassurance can help build trust.

Tips to help tamariki/children feel safe in Tinana (body) & Hinengaro (mind).

Routine - **As soon as possible**, start to return to their usual daily pattern, so they know what is going to happen. Talk to your children if things are going to change from their normal routine.

Give them extra attention – They may be acting younger because they need more attention. They may need more support at night if they are having nightmares – reassure them they are safe now, that is not happening again. Wait until daytime to ask if they want to talk about it.

Use lots of Praise - Praise and encouragement is a great way to help tamariki recover and build confidence.

Choices – Frightening events can make tamariki feel out of control. Having small choices can help them feel they have some control. For example: what clothes to wear, what food to eat, or what time they will do an activity.

Reassurance – They may blame themselves, remind them that it is not their fault and that accidents can happen to anyone.

Take things slowly - If they are avoiding places or things that remind them of the event, then you can help them to overcome fears by taking one step at a time. For example: if the event was a car accident spend time getting used to the car again, gently talking about each step along the way.

Butterfly hugs – This is a calming technique, It involves crossing your arms and putting your hands on your upper arms and tapping firmly with your hands one side then the other, at least two taps per second. The PCLT team have people trained in trauma therapy if you need support.



Tips for managing flashbacks.

Flashbacks and nightmares can occur when our brain tries to make sense of what happened. Flashbacks can often get stuck in the most distressing part of the memory.

Tips:

1. Try and think back to when you first felt safe after the event. When did you think “I’m going to be okay”? This is your **safe point**.

2 When you have a flashback or wake from a nightmare, instead of trying to push it out of your mind, **try and fast forward to your safe point**. If you are stuck in bits of the memory ask yourself ‘what happened next, what next – until you get to the safe point. This gets easier the more you do it

3: Reassure yourself. Tell yourself things like “I’m safe now. This is a memory. It is not happening now.”

4: Grounding techniques – what can you see, hear, smell, and touch around you? Focus on each of your senses.

5: Use distraction to soothe. Play is a great distraction for tamariki, games, T.V., music can all help give you a break from your feelings for a little while.

6.Koorero/talk – some people feel much better when they talk, like a weight has lifted from them. For some people talking about it is difficult and they may need more time, or support please refer to the list of support services on the back of this brochure.