



Tip Sheet #2

FEBRUARY 2009

Maintain Children's Usual Routines

In childhood, routines are very containing and give a very strong message that life is going on.

If a child has lost his/her house, is living somewhere strange, or going to a different school, reestablishing family routines is extremely comforting.

Children Need To See Adults Coping Effectively and Positively

Parents need to look at their own reactions.

In the eyes of a primary-aged child, the most important and competent people in the world are parents.

If parents are very distressed, we need to find some way to allow, express and work through these feelings - in a way that children don't see distress all the time.

Safely Talk About the Trauma

Talking about the trauma in a contained fashion decreases the likelihood of re-experiencing the trauma in forms such as: nightmares, drawing endless bushfire pictures (as little kids do), or endless talk about bushfires (as some older children do).

But, parents have to be able to talk about it. So again parents have to be able to look at and manage their own level of distress.

Tips for Talking About the Bushfires

- (i) Stick to the *facts*.
- (ii) Be very matter of *fact*.
- (iii) Reinforce the *fact* that this trauma will end.
- (iv) Give good *facts* - such as the Australian giving response, and all the volunteers who have done such a magnificent job, doing the best that they could.

Talking about it in a measured and contained way is very helpful for children.



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"There is NO evidence that talking about things might stir them up"

Dr. Brett McDermott

Tips for Watching Television

Of all the times when there should be active family participation in television viewing - trauma is the time. Do not allow children to watch extensive news specials about the bushfires.

If a child is watching bushfire footage, sit with the child. When the child becomes stressed, either engage and talk about it, or say "that's enough for today".

Endless incredibly distressing images, about things children care about (animals and other children), is very traumatizing if not modified by parents.