

Wouldn't it be better to just forget it?

It is tempting to think everything will be better if you just don't talk about it and ignore it. Often when children and teenagers live with the feelings and emotions of a traumatic event without help, it continues to affect them in a negative way.

When we talk about children in this pamphlet, we mean children of all ages, including teenagers.

Each child's treatment depends on their personal experience. The CAC's Clinical Specialist will move at your child's own pace. Talking about the trauma with a trained therapist is an important way to help your child regain a sense of control and normalcy.

Children who experience a traumatic event may also be affected by reminders or triggers that bring back the emotions and feelings from the event. Trauma-focused therapy helps the child know what to do when they experience reminders.

The CAC is here to help.

The CAC's Clinical Specialist and Case Coordinators can help you know if your child needs and is ready for therapy. There is no charge for these services. Afternoon and evening appointments for counseling are available.

As your child's caregiver, you will play an important role in his or her therapy. In some instances you will participate in sessions. There will be times when you will practice coping strategies with your child at home. Most parents find that counseling for their children supports them as well. The CAC will always help you if you need additional support or your own therapist.

Child Advocacy Center of Niagara Services

- A child friendly atmosphere for child abuse interviews and services
- Medical evaluations
- Coordination of investigative, legal, medical and mental health services
- Victim assistance and support
- Information and referral
- Professional training
- Community education and prevention
- Evidence-based trauma treatment
- Family Services Advocacy
- Child Abuse Intervention Project
- Family Violence Intervention Project
- Child Fatality Review Team
- Safe Harbour (child trafficking) Project

**This brochure was made possible
by funding from New York State Office
of Victim Services.**



THE
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
OF NIAGARA

**Golisano Center for
Community Health
533 Tenth Street
Niagara Falls, NY 14301
(716) 285-0045
www.cacofniagara.org**



THE
CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER
OF NIAGARA
A Service of Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center

Counseling after a traumatic event



NIAGARA FALLS
Memorial Medical Center
Exceptional care, exceptionally close.

The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara

The Child Advocacy Center of Niagara (CAC) is a child-friendly place where your child can be interviewed and receive a medical evaluation, counseling and other support services.

At the CAC, many agencies work together as a team:

- Law enforcement
- Niagara County Department of Social Services
- Niagara County District Attorney's Office
- NCSO Victim Assistance Unit
- Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center

The CAC offers counseling services for your child at no cost. The Center uses evidence-based therapeutic approaches that have been shown to reduce the negative effects of trauma.

The CAC's Clinical Specialist uses cognitive-behavioral approaches to:

- Teach children and teens stress management and relaxation skills to help them cope with unpleasant feelings.
- Help them talk about what happened in a way that lessens the painful feelings they have about the event and its impact on their life.
- Correct distorted or untrue thoughts they may have. Sometimes children feel they are at fault or that they caused the event. Counseling helps the child to understand the event better and to stop blaming themselves.
- Change unhealthy attitudes about the event. Some children think the event happened because they were "bad". Some think they are not "normal" or are different from other children because of the event.

Signs of Traumatic Stress

Traumatic stress occurs when your child continues to be affected by a traumatic event after it is over. Signs of traumatic stress can be different for each child and can depend on age. If your child experiences traumatic stress you should discuss it with the staff at the CAC.

Preschool Children

- Fear of being separated from a parent
- Crying or screaming
- Refusal to eat; weight loss
- Return to bed wetting or using baby talk
- New fears; nightmares
- Acting out the event during play
- Developmental delays or regression
- Changes in behavior

Elementary School Children

- Anxiety; fear; worry about safety
- Clinging to a parent or other adult
- Feelings of guilt or shame
- Talking about the event repeatedly
- Over-reaction to a small bump or bruise
- Poor concentration; feelings of numbness
- Fear the event will happen again
- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in school performance

Middle and High School Children

- Feelings of depression, isolation
- Discussing the event in detail
- Eating disorders and self-harming behaviors
- Use or abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Sexual activity
- Feelings of going crazy; being different
- Risk-taking behavior
- Sleep disturbances
- Avoidance of places that remind them of the event; saying they have no feeling about the event
- Changes in behavior

What Can I do to Help?

Children can—and do—recover from traumatic events. As a parent, you play an important role in helping your child cope. As difficult as it may seem now, you and your children are more resilient than you may think.

People react differently to trauma. Reactions are affected by age, development, history and family relationships. You can help your child and your family in these ways:

Be patient. Some children recover quickly but others need more time. Try not to push your child to "get over it". Reassure him or her that they do not need to feel guilty or bad about their feelings.

Reassure your child that he or she is not responsible for what happened. Children often blame themselves.

Maintain regular routines at home and at school.

Assure your child that he or she is safe. Remind your child about steps that are being taken to protect him or her.

Take time for yourself. Get the support you need.

Discuss your questions and concerns with the Child Advocacy Center staff. They are there to help you.



**For more information,
please contact us at
(716) 285-0045.
www.cacofniagara.org**