



How Does Your Child Cope?

Everyone has their own ways of coping with stressful events. Some ways of coping are positive and more effective than others. For example, some positive ways to cope with stressful events include seeking support from others, solving a problem, trying to remain calm and trying to look at the positive side of things. On the other hand, some ways of coping can be negative and usually do not help a difficult situation. Yelling, getting angry and blaming others are all examples of negative ways of coping. These ways of coping can lead to new problems.

Try to encourage your child to use positive ways of coping when dealing with upsetting events related to the terrorist attacks. The activities in this section will help you identify how your child is coping with recent events and encourage positive ways of coping. On the next page are some questions about the ways your child tries to cope. Have your child answer the questions in a quiet place. When your child is finished, go over the answers together.



Parent Activity: Identifying How Your Child Copes

While your child is completing their activity, think about how he or she usually copes with bad events. Below, write in the positive and negative ways your child copes.

Positive Ways My Child Copes	Negative Ways My Child Copes

JOINT ACTIVITY: Evaluate How Your Child Copes

Review your child’s responses together and talk about them. Items #3, 6, 9 and 12 are positive coping strategies that you can encourage your child to use. For example, item #3 reflects “having a positive outlook” and item #6 reflects “problem solving” as well as “talking about things that are upsetting.” In addition, item #9 reflects “keeping calm” and item #12 reflects “seeking support and comfort from others.” These coping strategies can help your child deal with stress better. Additional ideas for coping are covered in other sections of this book. “Seeking information” and “finding distraction” can also be effective ways of coping for some children.

The remaining items on the child’s page (#1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11) are negative ways of coping. They usually don’t help a difficult situation and sometimes can make it worse. For example, items #1 and 2 reflect “social withdrawal,” items #4 and 5 reflect “blaming self or others,” item #7 reflects “wishful thinking,” items #8 and 11 reflect “angry feelings” and item #10 reflects “feeling helpless.” If your child circled some of these items, you might want to help him or her focus on other ways of coping with stress. Again, some sections in this book will give you some good ideas.



How Do I Cope With Things That Happen?



Here is a list of things that children do to solve problems or feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you have done to feel better about the recent terrorist attacks. Circle YES or NO for each to show whether or not you did that to feel better about what has happened.

	<u>Did you do this?</u>	
1. I stayed by myself.	YES	NO
2. I kept quiet about the bad things that happened.	YES	NO
3. I tried to see the good side of things.	YES	NO
4. I blamed myself for causing the bad things that happened.	YES	NO
5. I blamed someone other than the terrorists for causing the bad things that happened.	YES	NO
6. I tried to fix the bad things by doing something or talking to someone.	YES	NO
7. I wished the bad things had never happened.	YES	NO
8. I yelled, screamed or got mad.	YES	NO
9. I tried to calm myself down.	YES	NO
10. I didn't do anything because the bad things couldn't be fixed.	YES	NO
11. I got mad or angry at others.	YES	NO
12. I tried to feel better by spending time with others like my family, grownups or friends.	YES	NO

(This was adapted from the KIDCOPE, with the permission of Anthony Spirito.)



Things That Can Help - Normal Routines

One of the most upsetting aspects of disasters and traumatic events for children and adults is that they shake people's feelings of safety and security. Helping your child feel safe and secure after a traumatic event will help your child feel less distressed. One of the ways to help your child cope is to get your child back into his or her normal routine.

Everybody has a normal routine that they more or less follow on a daily basis. Some have different routines for weekends and for weekdays. Resuming normal activities and routines will give your child a sense of comfort, as their day becomes more predictable. This familiar environment will help your child feel safer and more secure. It will also help to distract your child from feelings of distress. This section is designed to help you and your child identify a "normal routine."

It will also be helpful to identify and encourage your child's favorite everyday activities. Before your child begins working on the next page, you can make a photocopy of the page and let him or her complete the same activities for both normal weekday and weekend routines. For younger kids, this may be best done as a joint activity.



Parent Activity: Identifying Your Normal Routines

What are your normal routines? On a sheet of paper, list them. Include what activities you do and the times that you typically do them. It may be the case that you have already returned to your normal routines. If so, highlight any activities that are different now for you and your family than before the attacks (e.g., more television viewing). Keep a separate list for your weekday and weekend routines. When you work on the joint activity with your child, see if you can suggest some favorite everyday activities to add to both of your normal routines that do not take up a lot of time. For example, you can ride bicycles; or play catch, cards, board games or ping-pong.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Plan Some Fun Activities

Together, review your child's normal routine list from Page 19. Have your child highlight or mark with a star his or her favorite everyday activities. Together, make a list of favorite activities you and your child enjoy doing together. Then, add some of these favorite everyday activities to both of your normal routines that you will enjoy doing.

If you can, take out your daily planner or calendar and, along with your child, plan the next week or two. Write in or draw each favorite everyday activity that is planned. You can update your schedule periodically with different activities.

* A good idea is to let your child create his or her own calendar. Have them write in or draw their "schedule" and add in each planned favorite everyday activity. You can then hang your child's calendar in an easily viewable place, such as on a refrigerator door.



Things That Can Help - Normal Routines



What is your normal routine? On the left side, list things that you do on a normal day. When you are done, complete the clocks on the right side. Draw in the missing hands on each clock to show what time you normally do the listed activity.

What I normally do

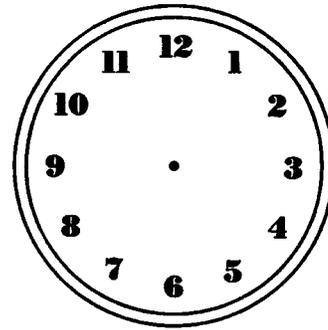
In the morning:

In the afternoon:

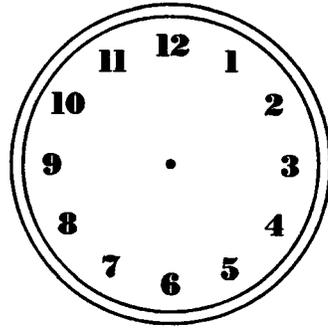
In the evening:

Before bedtime:

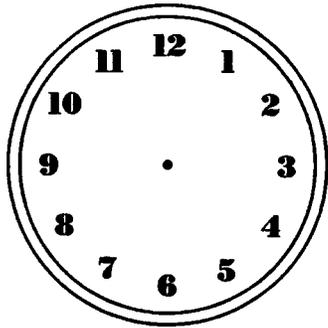
Complete the clocks



What time I normally wake up



What time I normally eat lunch



What time I normally go to bed



Things That Can Help - Reducing Exposure

Another way to help children cope with the terrorist attacks is to reduce their exposure to upsetting images of the attacks or to things that resemble the attacks. Visual images are ways of “re-experiencing” the event. For example, after the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City, children who watched television programs with images of the bombing and stories of the victims’ families had more distress and fears than children who did not watch much television.

Because of the distressing aspect of television images, your child will feel better if you limit viewing of terrorist-related programs. This is very important now when scenes of war, bombings and other terrorist-related events are reported in the news. Upsetting images can lead to increased fears, bad dreams and trouble sleeping. The kinds of TV shows to limit include the news and special programs about the terrorist attacks or about the victims and families who were hurt. It will also help to limit television shows, movies and even video games that have a lot of violence.

If you are unsure about the content of a show or movie, check the program’s ratings in the newspaper or on the Internet before viewing.* You can also periodically ask if there is anything on television that your child has questions about or that bothers them. You can also watch a show or movie with your child and turn the program off if it becomes upsetting. An even better idea is to limit television and media use in general, if this is possible. Instead, encourage your child to participate in other fun activities like reading, sports, community events, outdoor activities or card games. These activities will provide a distraction from upsetting events and help your child feel more in control. You can use your child’s responses from the next page to help you find alternative activities for them to do.

* Helpful websites for parents include the Yahoo! industry ratings for television shows (<http://tv.yahoo.com>) and movies (<http://movies.yahoo.com>). Another good website is the National Institute for Media and the Family (www.mediafamily.org), which provides ratings of the amount and portrayal of violence for most television shows and movies.



Parent Activity: What Does Your Child Watch?

Identify your child’s favorite television shows and movies. You can even watch the programs or movies with your child. Look the shows up in a newspaper or on the Internet to see their violence ratings and recommended viewing ages. If a program or movie appears unhealthy, limit your child’s viewing of it, or encourage other shows or activities.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Family Day

Need an excellent alternative to sitting around the house, watching television? Create a Family Day! Have your family pick one day out of the week or month and set it aside to spend quality time together. Do not let job responsibilities or schoolwork interfere with your day. Choose fun activities that everyone will enjoy. For example, have a family picnic, visit a park, museum or aquarium, go to a beach, take a scenic day trip or volunteer for a community service project.



Things That Can Help - What I Like To Do



Fill in the blanks. Tell how many days a week you do each activity listed.

ACTIVITY

- Watch TV
- Listen to music
- Play with friends
- Do family activities
- Read a book
- Play videogames
- Play sports



DAYS PER WEEK

List your favorites for each category:

My favorite hobbies are:

My favorite sports are:

My favorite family activities are:

My favorite musicians are:

My favorite books are:





Topic 8 Things That Can Help - Staying Physically Healthy

Stress can affect people physically as well as mentally. After a distressing event, many people do not feel like eating, or may have trouble sleeping. These changes make it harder for a person to cope with stress. Just as it is important to resume normal everyday activities, it is also important to stay active and healthy. This is especially true for children. A child who is healthy and physically fit will find it easier to cope with stress. In fact, all of us do better when we feel strong and healthy.

The activities in this section are designed to help you identify changes in your child’s eating, sleeping and exercise habits. They are also designed to help you get your child “back on track.” Have your child complete the activity on Page 23 while you finish the one below.



Parent Activity: Track Your Child’s Health

Observe your child over the next few days. Note any changes in your child’s health behaviors since the time of the terrorist attacks. Write down any changes you have noticed in the following categories:

Eating meals:	Sleeping or resting:
Exercise:	Increased complaints:

JOINT ACTIVITY: Coping Chart

Take a look at the physical changes you have noticed in your child. If there are areas that need improvement, work together on creating a “Coping Chart.” List things you and your child can do to cope. Include some of your child’s answers from Page 23. Together complete the chart. Some examples are:

<p><u>Eating (lack of appetite):</u> Drink a milkshake with fruit Take vitamins Have a regular family meal time Purchase healthy snacks (raisins, carrots)</p>	<p><u>Trouble falling or staying asleep:</u> Sleep with light on or a night-light Snuggle with a favorite doll Play soft music Count backward from 100</p>
<p><u>Exercise (lack of):</u> Join a sports league or youth group Learn a new sport (tennis or dance lessons) Develop a personal exercise routine Do outdoor activities (hiking, biking, etc.)</p>	<p><u>Increased physical complaints:</u> Have child checked by family doctor Practice relaxation to reduce stress (see Page 35)</p>



Things That Can Help - Staying Physically Healthy



By keeping healthy, you can deal better with the things that make you stressed or worried. In the boxes below, write or draw what you do to keep healthy for each category. Some examples are given to help you get started.

My favorite healthy foods

Apples



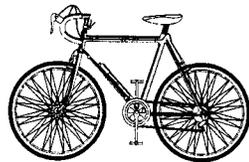
How I relax before bedtime

Listen to music



My favorite ways to exercise

Ride my bike



How I keep my body healthy

Brush my teeth

