

## Appendix E: Handouts

Parent Tips for Helping Adolescents after Disasters		
Reaction/Behavior	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<u>Detachment, shame, and guilt</u>	<p>► Provide a safe time to discuss with your teen the events and their feelings. ► Emphasize that these feelings are common, and correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done.</p>	<p>► "Many kids - and adults - feel like you do, angry and blaming themselves that they couldn't do more. You're not at fault - remember: even the firefighters said there was nothing more we could have done."</p>
<u>Self-consciousness</u> about their fears, sense of vulnerability, fear of being labeled abnormal.	<p>► Help teens understand that these feelings are common. ► Encourage relationships with family and peers for needed support during the recovery period.</p>	<p>► "I was feeling the same thing. Scared and helpless. Most people feel like this when a disaster happens, even if they look calm on the outside."          ► "My cell phone is working again, why don't you see if you can get a hold of Pete and see how he's doing?"          ► "And thanks for playing the game with your little sister. She's much better now."</p>
<u>Acting out behavior</u> : using alcohol and drugs, sexual acting out, accident-prone behavior.	<p>► Help teens understand that acting out behavior is a dangerous way to express strong feelings (like anger) over what happened. ► Limit access to alcohol and drugs. ► Talk about the danger of high-risk sexual activity. ► On a time-limited basis, have them let you know where they are going and what they're planning to do.</p>	<p>► "Many teens - and some adults - feel out of control and angry after a disaster like this. They think drinking or taking drugs will help somehow. It's very normal to feel that way - but it's not a good idea to act on it." ► "It's important during these times that I know where you are and how to contact you." Assure them that this extra checking-in is temporary, just until things have stabilized.</p>
<u>Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders</u>	<p>► Help to identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and to clarify the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it. ► Explain to teens that media coverage of the disaster can trigger fears of it happening again.</p>	<p>► "When you're reminded, you might try saying to yourself, 'I am upset now, because I am being reminded, but it is different now, because there is no hurricane and I am safe.'" ► Suggest "Watching the news reports could make it worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?"</p>

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<u>Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships</u> : Teens may pull away from parents, family, and even from peers; they may respond strongly to parent's reactions in the crisis.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Explain that the strain on relationships is expectable. Emphasize that we need family and friends for support during the recovery period.</li> <li>► Encourage tolerance for different family member's courses to recovery.</li> <li>► Accept responsibility for your own feelings.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Spend more time talking as a family about how everyone is doing. Say, "You know, the fact that we're crabby with each other is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling things amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other."</li> <li>► You might say, "I appreciate your being calm when your brother was screaming last night. I know he woke you up, too."</li> <li>► "I want to apologize for being irritable with you yesterday. I am going to work harder to stay calm myself."</li> </ul>
<u>Radical changes in attitude</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Explain that changes in other people's attitudes after a disaster are common, but will return back to normal over time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► "We are all under great stress. When people's lives are disrupted this way, we all feel more scared, angry - even full of revenge. It might not seem like it, but we all will feel better when we get back to a more structured routine."</li> </ul>
<u>Wanting premature entrance into adulthood</u> : (e.g. wanting to leave school, get married)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Encourage postponing major life decisions. Find other ways to make the adolescent feel more in control over things.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► "I know you're thinking about quitting school and getting a job to help out. But it's important not to make big decisions right now. A crisis time is not a great time to make major changes."</li> </ul>
<u>Concern for other victims and families</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not burden with undue responsibility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>► Help teens to identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful (e.g. clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need)..</li> </ul>