

TIPS & SCRIPTS WHEN SUPPORTING YOUTH DURING A TRAUMATIC EVENT



Create a Safer Space

Ensure physical and emotional safety by being a calm, reassuring presence, and connecting the child with trusted adults.

- *“You’re safe now. I’m here, and I won’t let anything happen to you.”*



Get on their Level

Kneel or sit to be at their eye level, helping youth to feel seen and understood.

- *“I’m right here with you. Let’s sit together.”*



Listen & Validate

Invite youth to share feelings and acknowledge their emotions without judgment.

- *“It’s okay to feel scared or sad. I’m here to listen if you want to talk about it.”*
- *“I believe you and I’m here to support you.”*



Provide Honest Reassurance

Use simple, age-appropriate language to explain what’s happening and avoid making promises.

- *“Sometimes things happen that feel confusing or scary. We are safe now and I’m going to sit with you until ____ arrives.”*



Keep a Neutral Position

Maintain a neutral position when speaking of individuals who may have caused the traumatic event and avoid stigmatizing language, such as “addict”.

- *“____ has been struggling with substance misuse. Drugs and alcohol change the way our brains & body work, so it can be harder to make good choices.”*



Encourage Expression

Offer creative outlets like drawing, writing, playdough, building blocks, or playing to help process emotions.

- *“Sometimes it helps to let our feelings out in different ways. We can draw a picture, write about it, talk, or play. What would you like to try?”*



Limit Distressing Information

Distract youth from upsetting media, overly detailed information, or adult conversations about the event.

- *“We don’t need to worry about all the details right now. Let’s focus on some things that we can use to calm our senses.”* (Offer water, snack, mint, something sensory, or focus on calming observations)



Remember:

- **Reassure youth it is not their fault**
- **Welcome questions**
- **LISTEN! LISTEN! LISTEN!**



This is a collaborative resource developed by National Alliance for Drug Endangered Children (NADC) and the Eluna Resource Center

