



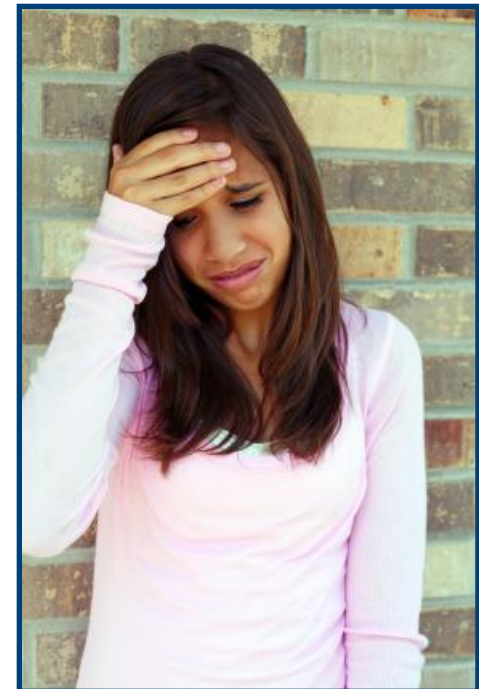
# **TRAUMA AND CHILDREN A GUIDE FOR HELPING CHILDREN MANAGE TRAUMATIC EVENTS**

**Presented by Military & Family Life Counselors**

# OBJECTIVES

## Participants will learn:

- About the types of reactions some children and adolescents might have to trauma
- Ways to talk to children and adolescents and help them cope



# AGENDA

- Introduction
- Children's Fears
- Children 1-5: Possible Reactions to Trauma
- Children 6-11: Possible Reactions to Trauma
- Children 12-18: Possible Reactions to Trauma
- Helping Children Cope
- Tips for Talking to Children
- When Problems Don't Improve



# INTRODUCTION

- Children can be affected by trauma whether they have actually witnessed it or only heard about it
- Some children recover very quickly - others have more difficulty
- You can't always protect them from trauma, but you can learn ways to help them cope and handle their feelings



# CHILDREN'S FEARS

## Children may have fears that:

- They or their family will be hurt
- The event will recur
- They will be separated from their family



# Reactions to Trauma



# CHILDREN 1-5: POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

## Some preschool age children may:

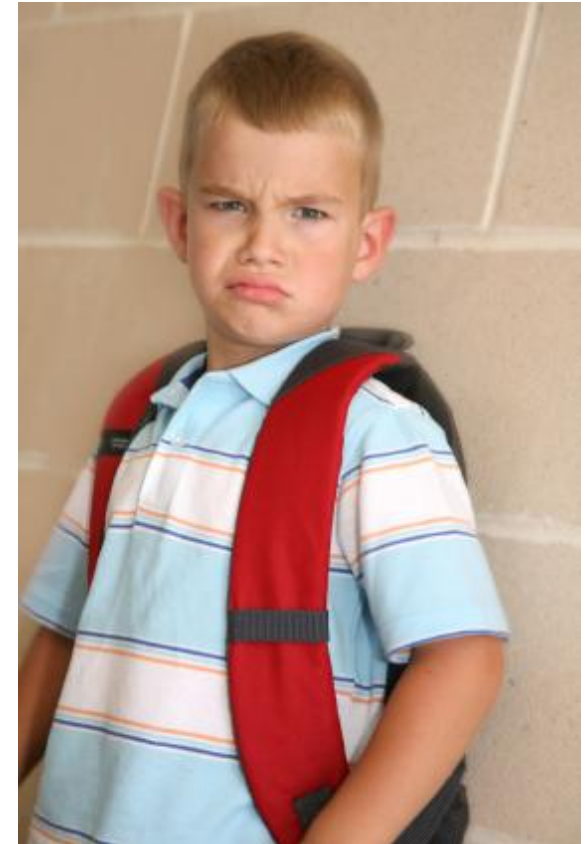
- Regress to an earlier developmental stage
- Refer to the event repeatedly
- May withdraw from family and friends
- Develop behavior problems
- May feel they caused the event
- Have changes in eating and/or sleeping routines
- Seek more attention from parents
- Fear of going to school/preschool/daycare



# CHILDREN 6-11: POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

## Some school age children may:

- Withdraw from friends and family
- Have a drop in grades
- Become angry, aggressive and defiant
- Have changes in eating and/or sleeping routines
- Seek more attention from parents
- Fear going to school





# YOUTH 12-18: POSSIBLE REACTIONS TO TRAUMA

## Some Adolescents may:

- Withdraw from family and friends
- Resist authority
- Become disruptive at home or school
- Engage in high risk behaviors
- Have a drop in grades
- Feel helpless and guilty regarding the event



# Helping Children Cope

# HELPING CHILDREN COPE

- Encourage children of all ages to express emotions
- Help them find a way to help others
- Provide lots of reassurance
- Maintain security and a normal routine
- Encourage exercise and provide nutritious meals
- For younger children, monitor exposure to media
- For older preadolescents and teens, watch the news and other media with them



# HELPING CHILDREN COPE

CONTINUED

- For younger children, give them something special and comforting to hold and keep nearby
- For older children and youth, you may want to lower expectations for a while regarding chores and school
- Use this as a time to establish a family emergency plan
- Help them identify positive things



# TIPS FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN

- Answer questions honestly, but don't dwell on disturbing details
- Ask your child what he/she thinks has happened
- Don't be afraid to admit you don't have all the answers
- Let them know you are available to talk with them whenever they need to
- Acknowledge your own reactions and emotions



# TIPS FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN

CONTINUED

- Help them open up by letting them know it's normal to feel worried
- If your younger child is reluctant to talk, have them draw pictures or use puppets or dolls to express their feelings
- Be patient when they ask the same questions many times





# WHEN PROBLEMS DON'T IMPROVE

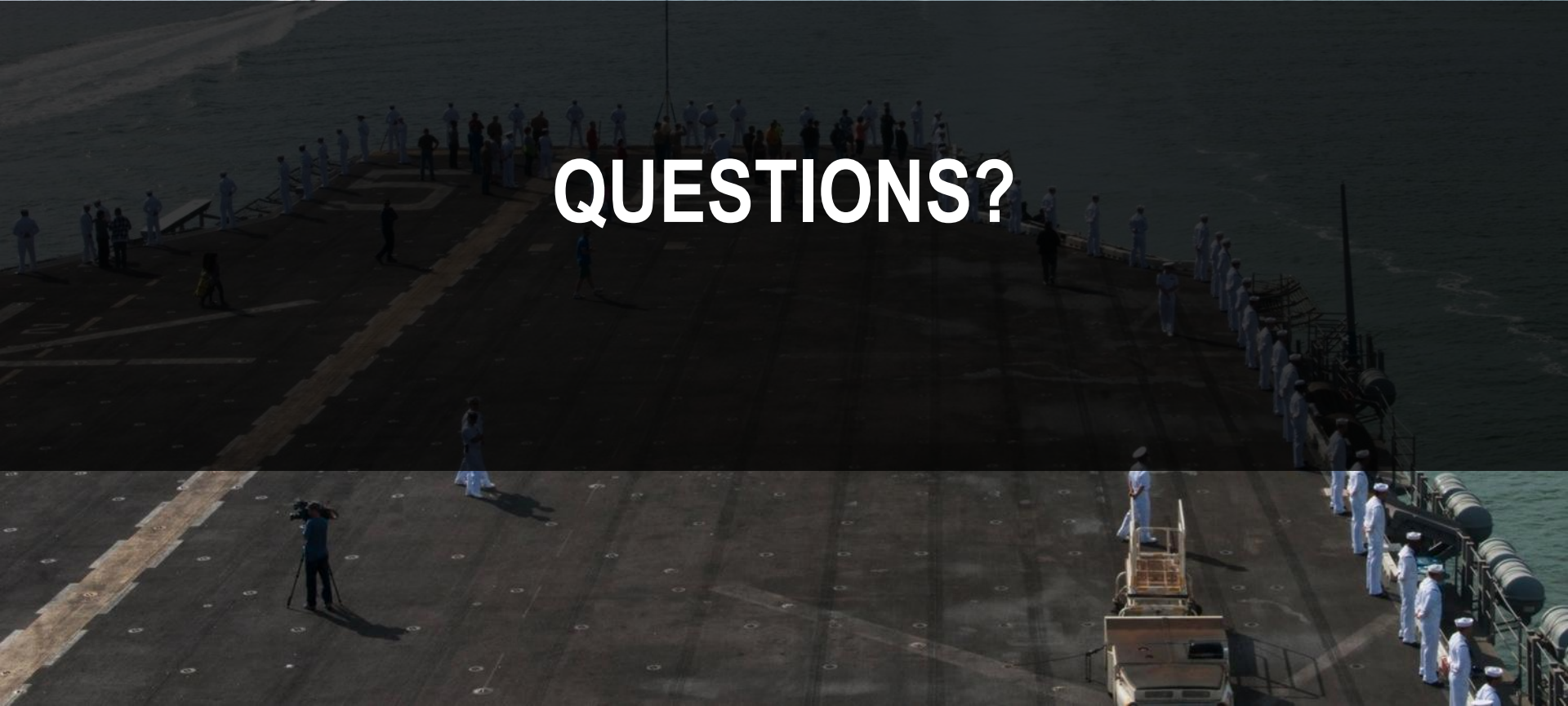
**If the following reactions don't improve after a few weeks, don't be afraid to seek help:**

- Sleep disturbance
- Change in appetite
- Regressive behaviors such as bedwetting, thumb sucking
- Excessive clinging and/or separation anxiety
- Withdrawn
- Unusual agitation or aggression





**QUESTIONS?**



# RESOURCES

- Military Community Services
- Chaplain and Local Clergy
- Military OneSource (800) 342-9647
- TRICARE [www.Tricare.mil](http://www.Tricare.mil)
- Behavioral Health Services



# REFERENCES

- Helping a child Manage Fears After a Traumatic Event, Sally L. Flagler, Ph.D., Ceridian Corporation, 1997, 2007
- Tips for Talking to Children and Youth After Traumatic Events: A guide for Parents and Educators, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services







**THANK YOU**