

# **TRAUMA SYMPTOMS – CHILDREN & ADOLESCENTS**

## **Birth – 2 years**

- High anxiety manifested in crying, biting, thumb sucking, etc.
- Separation difficulties

## **2 Years – 6 Years**

*In this age bracket children are significantly affected by their parent's reaction to the traumatic event.*

- Withdrawal - quiet, detached, mute
- Deny, avoid or ignore event
- Manifest fears - of new situations, strangers, certain places or objects
- Regression to earlier behaviour – bed wetting, thumb sucking, etc.
- Become very attached to caregivers - holding on to adults, not wanting to sleep alone, wanting to be held, etc.
- Sleep disturbances - nightmares are common
- Do not understand death and the permanency of it

## **7 Years – 12 Years**

- Performance decline - school, sports, hobbies, etc.
- Deny, avoid, ignore or reverse facts of event
- Behaviour changes - attention seeking, getting into trouble, etc.
- Restlessness, inability to pay attention
- Mood changes - a quiet child becomes active and noisy; an active child becomes quiet and isolated
- Psychosomatic complaints - stomach aches, headaches, nausea, rashes,
- May regress to previous stages

## **Adolescents**

*Adolescents will experience similar responses as adults.*

- Acting out behaviours - alcohol abuse, running away, suicidal expression
- Flashbacks, nightmares
- Avoidance of reminders of the traumatic event
- Low self-esteem – they may blame themselves
- Displaced anger onto inappropriate recipients – parents, siblings, etc.
- May ask existential questions - question the meaning of life
- Fear that the event may happen again
- Worry about dying at an early age