

## Our Vision

To reduce the impact of road trauma

## Our Mission

We are a community based organisation providing specialist counselling support for those affected by road trauma. We seek to change driver attitudes and behaviour through targeted education programs delivered, in part, by volunteers who share their personal stories of road trauma.

## Our Values

### Caring

We are committed to serving our clients with empathy and compassion

### Integrity

We display integrity, respect and dignity in all our dealings with clients, stakeholders and members of our workforce

### Quality

Our focus is on the people we serve and we strive for excellence in service delivery, evaluation and continuous improvement

### Accountability

We are accountable for our actions in working to deliver our services and our mission

Road Trauma Support Services Victoria (RTSSV) is a not-for-profit organisation contributing to the safety and wellbeing of Victorian road users. We provide counselling and support to people affected by road trauma, and address attitudes and behaviours of road users through education.

As the only organisation of its kind in Victoria, we provide the following services across the state:

- Free, professional face-to-face and telephone counselling
- Support and training
- Education programs

For more information about what we do, please call us or visit our website.

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Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible.

# How can I help my child?



When a family member (or members) is involved in a serious or fatal collision, the whole family (including very young children) is affected.

This brochure lists common reactions to serious road trauma events and suggests ways in which parents and other adults can provide support to bereaved and traumatised children and teenagers.

### Infancy to five

- May be fussy, irritable, clingy and harder to calm down
- May have distressing dreams or nightmares
- Behaviour and development may regress

What can help?

- Children need to feel safe and supported
- Maintain the child's routine
- Answer questions truthfully and factually
- Tell them the facts in an age-appropriate way
- Reassure children that things will be fine 'after a while'
- Reassure them that they are not to blame for what has happened
- Reassure them that they are safe and much-loved
- Be ready to be involved in play with young children - this can provide them with the opportunity to let you know about their worries and may be a starting point for further conversations

### Primary school age

- May hide their feelings to protect parent or carer
- May be concerned about who will care for them if other parent dies or is hurt
- School performance may deteriorate
- May complain about physical reactions like stomach ache or headache
- Development/behaviour may regress
- May 'act out' feelings

What can help?

- Reassure them that they are safe and will be cared for
- If you can ask your children what they are thinking and imagining
- Answer questions simply and directly
- Allow your child to speak about the traumatic event and/or death
- Reassure your child that grief and trauma reactions are normal
- Engage in activities you enjoy with the child like reading together (there are books about death and trauma that can be read with children)
- Drawing or writing about the event can assist your child in developing their own words to describe their own thoughts and feelings
- Normalise feelings of sadness, anger and fear

### Teenagers

- A time of physical, emotional, spiritual and sexual changes
- Respond in a similar way to adults but without life experience
- May become irritable, impulsive and uncooperative
- School performance may suffer

What can help?

- Give teenagers time to work through their feelings
- Give accurate information about the event and its consequences
- Correct any misunderstandings or unwarranted fears
- Answer questions accurately
- Be tolerant if the teenager is more private about their feelings and do not want to talk
- Let them know that you will always be there for them when they feel the need to raise questions or ask to talk
- Let them know how you are feeling, explain about grief and/or stress reactions
- Maintain routine and familiar activities
- Reassure teenagers about the future and that their current distress will pass in time
- Allow your teenager time alone
- Encourage supportive relationships with their peers
- Inform the school of the trauma event

Like adults, most children and teenagers will adapt and grow through crisis with the love and support of their family and friends. Trauma provides children and adolescents with opportunities for growth and discovery about themselves. With your help they can eventually mature as a result of their experience. They often show strength and resilience that has not been evident before.

To confidentially discuss any of the issues raised within this document, please call Road Trauma Support Services Victoria on **1300 367 797**