

## WONDERS & WORRIES

# When Additional Support May Be Needed



Wonders & Worries

Professional support for children through a parent's illness or injury.

We will, together.



When children experience difficult life circumstances, their coping is tested. While supporting your child through these hardships, it's important to keep in mind possible behaviors to look for that would indicate that your child may benefit from additional support. The severity of all signs and symptoms depends on the duration and intensity, so please keep that in mind. The lists below are general and not all encompassing although describe some typical responses you might see and behaviors that if prolonged, may warrant additional support.

### TYPICAL RESPONSES MAY BE:

- Not able to verbalize a clear understanding of what is happening
- Quickly engage in play during and/or after conversation
- Pretend that everything is “normal” and their loved one is going to recover
- Repeat the same questions

- Desire the same routines and ask to do things they would normally do (sports, school, be with friends, attend events)
- Use play to process and express feelings about the situation



### SIGNS ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MAY BE NEEDED:

- Extreme denial and disbelief
- Excessive state of anger, fear, and panic
- Negative view of self, the world, and their relationship within it
- Daydreams or seems distracted a lot of the time
- Cannot be comforted or calmed
- Acts very different than usual
- Appetite changes (over or under eating)
- Low energy
- Withdrawing and seeking isolation
- Sleep challenges (trouble falling asleep or sleeping for extremely long periods)
- Frequent acting out behaviors (lying, abusing drugs and/or alcohol)
- Pre-occupation with blood, fire, or gore
- Heightened fears about the health and safety of others

### WHEN SEEKING ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

- Inquire with your child's medical team and/or insurance provider to explore supportive providers.
- Identify clinicians who can support the developmental needs of your child and who have adequate experience supporting children through change. Our recommendation is for a clinician to have several years of experience with a wide range of ages and a variety of expressive modalities to individualize support accordingly (play, sand tray, expressive arts and talk therapy). Some questions to ask to determine goodness of fit and to begin to build trust with a potential clinician may include:
  - What is your professional license or certification?
  - How long have you worked with children and teens?
  - What type of therapy do you use in your practice? (i.e., play therapy, expressive arts, sand tray, cognitive behavioral, etc.)
  - Do you have experience working with families impacted by illness?
  - How will I, as the parent, be involved in the therapeutic process? (i.e., parent consultations, frequency of information sharing, family sessions, etc.)

Adjusting to change (and loss) is not a linear process and can ebb and flow for children and families. Enlisting the support of extended family members, school alliances, and others in the community can be important as all reeling from this change begin to cope and regain a sense of equilibrium.

**If you would like to connect with a child life specialist to talk this through further at any point, please contact the Wonders & Worries Helpline at 1-844-WE-WONDER or [helpline@wondersandworries.org](mailto:helpline@wondersandworries.org)**



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