

## The power of prayer & action

While many New Zealanders would agree that NZ is still a great place to bring up children, sadly the truth is that more and more children each year are experiencing unacceptable levels of trauma.

Presbyterian Support Northern asks that you cover all children with your prayers. Particularly those experiencing trauma. Together through prayer and action, we can help transform these children's lives.

### WHAT IS TRAUMA?

We often think of trauma caused by events such as the loss of a parent or friend, or from witnessing domestic violence. Other things can traumatize children too such as shocking news on TV, being bullied, having a parent in prison or even the loss of a pet.

Trauma knows no boundaries, rich, poor and everyone in between. It can be hidden behind high walls.

"Brian was just 11 when his father suddenly died in an accident. It was a particularly stressful time for the whole family, including his mum".

## SOME SIGNS THAT A CHILD MAY BE STRUGGLING WITH TRAUMA

A traumatic event may be the first time in their young life that a child has been faced with truly overwhelming emotions. Look for key signs of trauma such as:

- ★ ANGER
- ★ SLEEPLESSNESS
- ★ WITHDRAWAL
- ★ REPEATEDLY ASKING QUESTIONS
- ★ CONSTANT WORRYING
- ★ FREQUENT CRYING

"Shocked and overcome with sadness and despair, Brian withdrew into himself. He felt disconnected from everyone around him. Unable to express his emotions, Brian began to lash out at those closest to him".

# Praying for Children @ Risk

"Take care of our children..."

- Dame Whina Cooper

23 June – 29 June



"Today, Brian is a different boy. He is smiling again and talking more freely. In class he is no longer crying and he joins in school activities fully."



kidsfriendly.org



## Child rich communities

DAY SEVEN

All children have the same core needs – love, kindness and understanding.

We all need to work together as a community to help all children know that when they feel scared, they have a safe, secure place to go to find support and understanding.

"When we do the best we can, we never know what a miracle is wrought in our life or in the life of another" (Maya Angelou)

## WHAT ARE SOME OF THE ACTIONS WE CAN TAKE TO HELP CHILDREN STRUGGLING WITH TRAUMA?

- ★ Encourage children to ask questions
- ★ Become a 'listening' church where children feel able to express their feelings
- ★ Keep the thoughts of children struggling with trauma in your prayers
- ★ Support Family Works (part of PSN) by becoming a Family Works Angel <https://www.familyworksnorthern.org.nz/get-involved/guardian-angel>

"Family Works' social worker Daniel worked with Brian to build up trust and encourage the little boy to talk about how he was feeling. Brian shared how unhappy he was at home, and how he felt like no one cared about him".

# Essential ingredients to support children suffering with trauma

## DAY ONE

### Good time to talk

Pick a time when your surroundings are calm and relaxed, and you have time to stay and discuss things as much as needed. It's okay if children don't want to talk! Just being with them can be supportive and help build trust.

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms."*

(1 Peter 4:10)

## DAY TWO

### Talking honestly

Be honest with children.

Remain calm yourself — you can answer their questions generally without scary details.

Children have different levels of understanding, so it is important to be aware of their exposure to trauma.

*"Every house where love abides, and friendship is a guest, is surely home, and home sweet home for there the heart can rest."*

(Henry Van Dyke)



## DAY THREE

### "I hear you"



**Listening well.**

Encourage children to talk. Practice really listening to what they are saying.

If they are struggling to finish a sentence, be patient. Don't try to help by finishing their sentence or second-guess them. Instead, you could quietly encourage them to share their story and feelings with you.

*"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."*

(1 Peter 5:7)

## DAY FOUR

### Express yourself

You can help children talk about their fears and worries by encouraging them to draw pictures or play or act how they feel.

Demonstrating their emotions in this way can build trust between you, and you can learn how children express themselves.

Each child is different.

*"Hope is the gift of something new."*

(Miroslav Volf)

## DAY FIVE

### Lovingly supporting

Help children feel heard, understood and valued.

You can lovingly support children through listening, talking, and the tone of your voice.

You can model calm behavior too.

*"Whatever you do for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you do for me."*

(Matthew 25:40)



## DAY SIX

### Keep listening

Make yourself open to children talking again about their fears and worries. Their trauma may last a long time.

They need to feel safe and secure enough to know they can keep talking as long as they need to.

Keep checking in and let them know they can talk to you when they want to.

*"Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world."*

(Desmond Tutu)

