



## Supporting Autistic Children Who've Experienced Acute Trauma

This document is designed to help you understand and support your child through this challenging time.

**Understanding Trauma:** First, let's discuss what trauma is and how it can affect your child. Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing or disturbing event. For autistic children, significant changes and traumatic experiences can be especially overwhelming, leading to heightened anxiety and sensory sensitivities.

**Signs of Trauma in Autistic Children:** Some common signs of trauma in autistic children include:

- Increased irritability or aggression
- Withdrawal from usual activities
- Sleep disturbances
- Regression in speech or behaviors
- Heightened sensory sensitivities
- Frequent meltdowns

**Communication:** It's essential to communicate with your child in a way that's comfortable and meaningful to them. Use visual aids, written text, or whatever their preferred mode of communication is. Let them know you're there to support them. If your child has questions about what happened, answer them honestly but in a developmentally appropriate way. Don't tell them more than they need to know.

**Routine and Predictability:** Autistic children often find comfort in routines and predictability. Even if things are not normal, do your best to establish a daily schedule and stick to it as much as possible. Visual schedules can help them know what to expect and can reduce anxiety.

**Sensory Support:** We know that sensory sensitivities are common in autistic children, and trauma can make them more apparent. If your child uses sensory tools to regulate themselves, make sure they have what they need - things like fidget toys, noise-cancelling headphones, or whatever works for your child.

**Professional Help:** If you notice severe or prolonged trauma symptoms (which will be elaborated on in another video), don't hesitate to seek professional help. ALUT and other organizations have set up hotlines and support centers. A therapist or counsellor experienced in working with autistic children can provide essential support and guidance.

**Self-care/building a support network:** Remember that you, as a parent, also need self-care. Taking care of yourself allows you to better support your child. Find time for relaxation, reach out to support groups, and seek counselling if needed. In times like these, we all need to lean on friends, family, and support networks who understand us. You don't have to go through this alone.

In summary, understanding and supporting your autistic child after trauma requires patience, clear communication, sensory support, and sometimes professional help. Remember to take care of yourself and build a strong support network. Your love and support will be a crucial factor in their recovery.

We hope this has been helpful. If you have any questions or would like further resources, please reach out to your local autism support organizations.