

## 2 Establishing New Routines

If your family has experienced separation and you are the parent who remains to care for the children, you may establish new routines and a new sense of independence. The transition may be tough and children may be sad or throw tantrums to test out the new routines. They also may regress in some areas such as potty training or sleeping through the night. Parents who remain, should be physically close and emotionally available to the children. The children need reassurance of their safety and security.

*Here are a few tips to help during this time:*

- Establish a new routine, and then keep it consistent. Consistency adds to feelings of safety and security for children.
- Provide physical closeness and more focused attention, such as in reading together, taking walks together, or cooking together.
- Build a new support network that also supports the children.
- Parents should respond in brief but honest answers to the child who has questions. Don't share details that children may inflate in their imagination. Children need to know that they are safe and the remaining parent is in charge and in control (not out of control, constantly crying or depressed).
- For teens, maintain limits and provide opportunities for added responsibility without over-burdening them.
- Notify the school system and all teachers about the family changes.
- Adults should find leisure outlets for themselves (physical movement as in walking or biking, and hobby or civic related activity like volunteering to help others)
- Model how to apologize when you lose your temper due to stress.
- Some young children need transitional objects (a favorite doll, blanket, or cuddle toy) to comfort them and help them feel safe. Don't make fun of these nor take them away for punishment. These are very critical to their sense of self and their adjustment. Be aware of when they retrieve these items and be sensitive to why they need them more at some times than others. Be there to add comfort to the child's world.

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