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**LIMIT TV EXPOSURE TO PROTECT KIDS FROM RE-TRAUMATIZATION
ASSOCIATED WITH ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF TERROR ATTACKS**

Across the nation, television stations soon will be re-broadcasting scenes of the World Trade Center collapsing, possibly re-traumatizing children who believe the attacks are happening all over again.

Oklahoma children may be even more at risk, as many have already experienced major stresses associated with the 1995 bombing and the 1999 tornado, said Dr. Brent Bell, medical director of the Oklahoma Youth Center in Norman, an inpatient facility for children and adolescents operated by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.

“Oklahoma kids have had a lot to deal with,” he said. “With the one-year anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, young children who see re-broadcasts on TV may have a difficult time processing that this is in the past and that nobody else has gotten hurt this year. It may disturb their sleep, they may have nightmares, become ‘clingy’ and need emotional reassurance.”

Other symptoms may include a resurgence in bedwetting, wanting to sleep with parents or sleep with the lights on, becoming tearful or anxious, and asking questions about safety, wondering if the attacks will happen again.

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Bell said parents should monitor their children's exposure to TV re-broadcasts, avoiding exposure completely for children under age 5 and limiting exposure for children ages 5 to 10.

"The more senses involved, the more traumatic the experience," he said. "In the case of re-broadcasts, we undoubtedly will re-hear the tapes, the blaring sirens and the screaming people, and we will see people running from the buildings. Television broadcasts impact a lot of our senses, so watching it again will be traumatic."

Children with pre-existing emotional problems are at even greater risk, Bell said.

"Every child and every adult has a stress point at which they begin to regress because they simply can't handle any more," he said. "A child who is already stressed or who has been abused or developmentally delayed can't handle as much as a child who is healthier. They start back down the regression path faster and become re-traumatized."

Bell said it's a good idea for parents to talk with their kids about the upcoming one-year anniversary, emphasize that any collapsing buildings they see are not "new" buildings falling down, limit TV exposure, possibly rent movies to watch, and encourage children to participate in constructive activities such as writing letters or drawing artwork to send to children in New York.

"By turning this event into a positive experience – doing something for someone else – children may not be affected at all," he said. "This is an event that has changed all of our lives, including the lives of children. There is no way to avoid it or ignore it. Doing so would be dangerous, too. Kids learn from watching adults. If we, as parents, teachers

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and mentors, can show sympathy, empathy and caring, children will learn from that. We have to let them know we care about these people and what has happened to them, and that we're not going to forget them.

“The one-year anniversary of 9-11 can be an experience that ties us all together into the same fabric and the same history as humans, and as Americans,” he added. “It connects us.”

Bell added that children in emotionally stable, intact homes fare much better than children whose home lives are erratic. “If parents become afraid and lose control at this time, a child may suffer,” he said. “A child’s sense of reality is framed around the stability of the parents. That stability is a very protective factor in reducing trauma.”

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