



This information sheet is designed to support people with Down syndrome and their families during and after distressing events.

Section 1 is for parents, carers and families supporting a person with Down syndrome, and Section 2 is for people with Down syndrome with families. The language in Section 2 is pitched for adolescents and can be adapted to suit different ages and support needs.

## Section 1

Distressing events can feel close to home, either geographically or culturally, even when they do not happen often in Australia. Even if you do not know someone who was directly affected, they can still be deeply distressing.

Ongoing news coverage and social media can increase exposure to details, images and commentary, which may intensify emotional responses over time.

## Possible Reactions

A person with Down syndrome may:

- Seek repeated reassurance or ask the same questions.
- Express increased worry about safety or public spaces.
- Spend increased time online engaging with news or social media.
- Experience disrupted sleep or heightened anxiety.
- Show changes in mood or behaviour.

These responses are common and reflect the understanding and processing of what has happened.

## How you can support them

Supportive strategies include:

- Providing reassurance about current safety.
- Acknowledging that what occurred was wrong and upsetting.



- Encouraging expression through conversation, social stories, drawing, or other preferred methods.
- Answering questions honestly, without unnecessary detail.
- Focusing on the actions of helpers, community, and positive responses.
- Maintaining predictable routines.
- Monitoring and limiting exposure to distressing media content.
- Checking in regularly, even if distress is not obvious.

## News and social media exposure

News and social media platforms use algorithms. This means that if a person clicks on a story, they may begin to see more stories, videos, and images about the same topic. Repeated exposure can contribute to increased distress or feelings of being overwhelmed.

Helpful approaches include:

- Encouraging regular breaks from social media.
- Viewing or discussing news together when appropriate.
- Using settings such as “see less of this”.
- Muting, hiding or blocking distressing content.

## When to seek additional support

If distress persists, escalates, or begins to affect daily functioning, professional support may be helpful.

Support services available in Australia:

- **Lifeline** 13 11 14
- **Beyond Blue** 1300 22 4636
- **Black Dog Institute** [blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://blackdoginstitute.org.au)

If someone is in immediate danger, call **000**.



## Section 2: Read this together

You can read this part together.

You can go slowly and take breaks.

### What happened

Something terrible and frightening happened at *INCIDENT*.

Someone one did something very wrong.

This was not okay.

Emergency services and many other people helped.

Many people were kept safe.

Many people were saved.

### Bad things and good people

Yes, bad things happened because of these people.

But many good people helped.

People who helped included:

- Police and ambulance officers.
- Doctors and nurses.
- Shop workers and security.
- People nearby who helped others.

They acted quickly and bravely.

They helped people get to safety and helped people who were hurt.

### How you might feel

After something scary, you might:

- Feel sad or upset.
- Feel angry or confused.
- Feel scared or unsafe.
- Feel worried or nervous.
- Think about the incident a lot.
- Have trouble sleeping.



- Want to stay close to people you trust.

These feelings are normal.

## **Being online and on social media**

When you watch or click on posts online, the app learns what you look at.

This means you see more stories or videos about the same thing.

To help:

- Look at less of this content.
- Take breaks from social media.
- Choose “see less of this” option in settings.
- Mute or hide upsetting posts.

If you need support with your social media settings, you can ask a parent/carer, friend, or other person close to you.

## **Things that can help you feel calmer**

You can try:

- Listening to music.
- Slow breathing.
- Going for a walk.
- Holding something comforting.
- Sitting with someone you trust.
- Doing something you enjoy.

## **A final message**

Something bad happened.

But many good people helped.

Many people were kept safe.

Strong feelings are normal.

You are not alone.

Help is available. You can ask for help to call someone or talk to someone.

If someone is in immediate danger, call **000**.