When children are frightened it is important to help them learn to take back control of their feelings. Reviewing with your child what has been discussed in CFTSI sessions about the new fears and anxious behaviors is a good place to start. Your child may not remember or understand that his/her new worries are connected to the traumatic event that has just occurred. Reminding your child of this connection will help him/her to know that the scary feelings were not so strong before the event and will not be so strong forever. This is also a good time to point out that the danger of the traumatic event is no longer present and that you will make sure that they are safe. Helping your child make a connection between the scary feelings stirred up by the traumatic event and the anxious ways they are behaving can also help them begin to take control. In our CFTSI sessions, we will continue talking about these things together in order to help your child become curious about the connections between how they feel and what they think about.

Make sure that you check in with how you are feeling before you try to help your child deal with their anxious feelings. The calm and patient ways that you respond to your child will be extremely important in helping to bring down their fearful and nervous feelings.

**Maintain Daily Routines**

Even when your child thinks it will really help, agreeing with your child to avoid places and activities that are important parts of daily life will not help your child take charge of what is causing them so much anxiety.

**Support School Attendance**

When avoiding school is one of the ways your child is expressing anxiety, talk with the child’s teacher so that they are prepared to be sympathetic but firm in helping the child to remain in school.

**Increase Contact With Supportive Adults**

Engage the child in activities that remind them of their abilities and strengths – for example assign them special tasks around the home or in the classroom that they are good at.

**Help the Child Talk About the Worry that Drives the Behavior**

Once you know what your child is worried about, answer questions that they may have as best as you can. When you have facts you can correct misunderstandings or misinformation, and you can help your child recognize the difference between the traumatic event and their current circumstances.
REMEMBER THE CHILD OF THE REAL CIRCUMSTANCES RELATED TO THE
AVOIDANT OR ANXIOUS BEHAVIOR

For example, assure your child that the rooms of the house are safe; the
abuser is not allowed to see them or that you will make sure to keep your
child safe from the person that attacked them. It is important to acknowledge
the fact that the events made the child frightened, but if it is true that the
danger has passed, children need to be reminded of this as well.

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS EXTREMELY NERVOUS OR PANICKY:

HELP THEM GET CALM

If your child is younger or wishes to be held, hold him; if sobbing and
breathless, help your child regain control. Instruct your child to breathe slowly
with you. Tell your child to breathe in through their nose while counting slowly
to three. Then breathe out through the mouth while counting slowly to four.
Do the exercise with your child. For example, you can say “I want you to take
a focused breath with me and let it out very slowly….that’s it. Now breathe in
and out with me…nice and slow…."

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELATION (especially for children older than 10)

Repeat each procedure at least once, tensing each muscle group for five to
seven seconds and then relaxing them for twenty to thirty seconds. Remember to
observe the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation. It is not
absolutely necessary to do all the steps; some children can only do the first one
and that is fine.

Step 1: Fold both your hands into tight fists. Tighten the biceps and forearms.
Hold on for a few seconds. Relax.

Step 2: Wrinkle your forehead. At the same time, push your head as far back as
possible. Roll it towards the right and then towards the left, then bring it back.
Now tense up all your facial muscles - press your eyes hard, wrinkle your
forehead, tighten your jaws, tongue pressing the roof of the mouth. Stay in this
position for a few seconds, and then relax.

Step 3: Arch your back as you take a slow breath. Hold. Relax. Take a slow
breath, pressing out stomach. Hold. Relax.

Step 4: Pull your feet and toes up towards the face. Hold. Relax. Now push your
feet and toes down, tightening the calves, thighs and buttocks. Hold for a few
seconds, and then relax. Relaxation is a skill which all of you can master with
sufficient practice and persistence. It is not only useful for symptom reduction,
but goes a long way in improving the overall quality of your lives -- provided it
becomes a part of your everyday routine.