

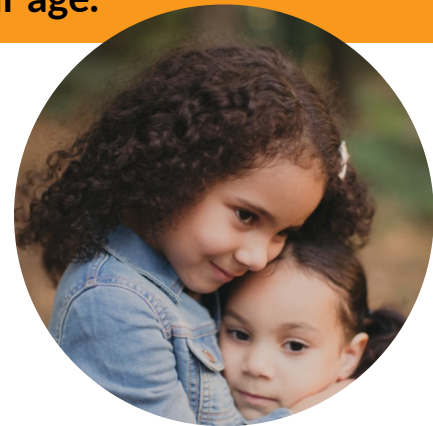


Talking to Children after a Disaster

It is normal for young people to show signs of stress after a disaster. Young people show signs of stress differently, depending on their age.

Disaster-related stress affects young people in several ways:

- Damage and injuries that result from unexpected or uncontrollable events are difficult for most children to understand.
- Following a disaster, a child's view of the world as safe and predictable is temporarily lost. This is true for adults as well.
- Children express their feelings and reactions in various ways, especially in different age groups.



Tips for talking with and helping children after a disaster or traumatic event:

- **Pay attention and be a good listener.** Most children want to talk about a trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset or stressed.
- **Allow them to ask questions.** But try to limit media exposure so they have time away from reminders about the trauma.
- **Model self-care.** Adults can show children how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and emotional health, you are more likely to be readily available to support the children you care about.
- **Talk on a level that your child can understand.** Younger children may not understand, but take the time to hold them and tell them how much you love them and that you will always do your best to care for and protect them.

Children with cognitive limitations may respond to traumatic events based more on their observations of adult and peer emotions rather than the verbal explanations that they may receive. Discussions with them need to be specific, concrete and basic; it may be necessary to use pictures in explaining events and images.

**For more resources and support on talking to your children:
503-215-2429 or 833-868-4769
helpmegrow@providence.org**

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Helping Children Cope After a Traumatic Event

In the wake of a traumatic event, your comfort, support and reassurance can make children feel safe, help them manage their fears, guide them through their grief, and help them recover in a healthy way. This guide was assembled by psychiatrists, psychologists and mental health experts who specialize in crisis situations. It offers simple tips on what to expect, what to do and what to look out for. If you or your children require assistance from a mental health professional, do not hesitate to ask a doctor or other health care provider for a recommendation.

Tips for Helping Children After the Event

- Make your child feel safe. All children, from toddlers to teens, will benefit from your touch—extra cuddling, hugs or just a reassuring pat on the back. It gives them a feeling of security, which is so important in the aftermath of a frightening or disturbing event. For specific information on what to do and say, see the age-by-age-guide.
- Act calm. Children look to adults for reassurance after traumatic events have occurred. Do not discuss your anxieties with your children, or when they are around, and be aware of the tone of your voice, as children quickly pick up on anxiety.
- Maintain routines as much as possible. Amidst chaos and change, routines reassure children that life will be okay again. Try to have regular mealtimes and bedtimes. If you are homeless or temporarily relocated, establish new routines. And stick with the same family rules, such as ones about good behavior.
- Help children enjoy themselves. Encourage kids to do activities and play with others. The distraction is good for them, and gives them a sense of normalcy.
- Share information about what happened. It's always best to learn the details of a traumatic event from a safe, trusted adult. Be brief and honest, and allow children to ask questions. Don't presume kids are worrying about the same things as adults.
- Pick good times to talk. Look for natural openings to have a discussion.
- Prevent or limit exposure to news coverage. This is especially critical with toddlers and school-age children, as seeing disturbing events recounted on TV or in the newspaper or listening to them on the radio can make them seem to be ongoing. Children who believe bad events are temporary can more quickly recover from them.
- Understand that children cope in different ways. Some might want to spend extra time with friends and relatives; some might want to spend more time alone. Let your child know it is normal to experience anger, guilt and sadness, and to express things in different ways—for example, a person may feel sad but not cry.

- Listen well. It is important to understand how your child views the situation, and what is confusing or troubling to him or her. Do not lecture—just be understanding. Let kids know it is OK to tell you how they are feeling at any time.
- Help children relax with breathing exercises. Breathing becomes shallow when anxiety sets in; deep belly breaths can help children calm down. You can hold a feather or a wad of cotton in front of your child’s mouth and ask him to blow at it, exhaling slowly. Or you can say, “Let’s breathe in slowly while I count to three, then breathe out while I count to three.” Place a stuffed animal or pillow on your child’s belly as he lies down and ask him to breathe in and out slowly and watch the stuffed animal or pillow rise and fall.
- Acknowledge what your child is feeling. If a child admits to a concern, do not respond, “Oh, don’t be worried,” because he may feel embarrassed or criticized. Simply confirm what you are hearing: “Yes, I can see that you are worried.”
- Know that it’s okay to answer, “I don’t know.” What children need most is someone whom they trust to listen to their questions, accept their feelings, and be there for them. Don’t worry about knowing exactly the right thing to say — after all, there is no answer that will make everything okay.

Tips for Helping Kids Recover in a Healthy Way

- Realize that questions may persist. Because the aftermath of a disaster may include constantly changing situations, children may have questions on more than on occasion. Let them know you are ready to talk at any time. Children need to digest information on their own timetable and questions might come out of nowhere.
- Encourage family discussions about the death of a loved one. When families can talk and feel sad together, it’s more likely that kids will share their feelings.
- Do not give children too much responsibility. It is very important not to overburden kids with tasks, or give them adult ones, as this can be too stressful for them. Instead, for the near future you should lower expectations for household duties and school demands, although it is good to have them do at least some chores.
- Give special help to kids with special needs. These children may require more time, support and guidance than other children. You might need to simplify the language you use, and repeat things very often. You may also need to tailor information to your child’s strength; for instance, a child with language disability may better understand information through the use of visual materials or other means of communication you are used to.
- Watch for signs of trauma. Within the first month after a disaster it is common for kids to seem mostly okay. After that, the numbness wears off and kids might experience more symptoms — especially children who have witnessed injuries or death, lost immediate family members, experienced previous trauma in their lives or who are not resettled in a new home.
- Know when to seek help. Although anxiety and other issues may last for months, seek immediate help from your family doctor or from a mental health professional if they do not abate or your child starts to hear voices, sees things that are not there, becomes paranoid, experiences panic attacks, or has thoughts of wanting to harm himself or other people.

- Take care of yourself. You can best help your child when you help yourself. Talk about concerns with friends and relatives; it might be helpful to form a support group. If you belong to a church or community group, keep participating. Try to eat right, drink enough water, stick to exercise routines, and get enough sleep. Physical health protects against emotional vulnerability. To reduce stress, do deep breathing. If you suffer from severe anxiety that interferes with your ability to function, seek help from a doctor or mental health professional and if you don't have access to one, talk with a religious leader. Recognize your need for help and get it. Do it for your child's sake, if for no other reason.

How to Help Children Ages 0-2

Infants sense your emotions, and react accordingly. If you are calm, your baby will feel secure. If you act anxious and overwhelmed, your baby may react with fussing, have trouble being soothed, eat or sleep irregularly or may act withdrawn.

What you can do:

- Try your best to act calm. Even if you are feeling stressed or anxious, talk to your baby in a soothing voice.
- Respond consistently to your baby's needs. The developmental task of this age is to trust caregivers so kids can develop a strong, healthy attachment.
- Continue nursing if you have been breastfeeding. Although there is a myth that when a mother experiences shock her breast milk turns bad and could cause the baby to be "slow" or have learning disorders, that is not true. It is important to continue nursing your baby to keep her healthy and connected with you. You need to stay healthy to breastfeed, so do your best to eat enough and drink water.
- Look into your baby's eyes. Smile at her. Touch her. Research shows that eye contact, touch and simply being in a mother's presence helps keep a baby's emotions balanced.

How to Help Children Ages 2-5

At this age, although children are making big developmental advances, they still depend on parents to nurture them. As with babies, they typically respond to situations according to how parents react. If you are calm and confident, your child will feel more secure. If you act anxious or overwhelmed, your child may feel unsafe.

Typical reactions of children ages 2 to 5:

- Talking repeatedly about the event or pretending to "play" the event
- Tantrums or irritable outbursts
- Crying and tearfulness
- Increased fearfulness—often of the dark, monsters, or being alone

- Increased sensitivity to sounds like thunder, wind, and other loud noises
- Disturbances in eating, sleeping and toileting
- Believing that the disaster can be undone
- Excessive clinging to caregivers and trouble separating
- Reverting to early behavior like baby talk, bed-wetting and thumb-sucking

What you can do:

- Make your child feel safe. Hold, hug and cuddle your child as much as possible. Tell her you will take care of her when she feels sad or scared. With children who are learning to talk, use simple phrases such as “Mommy’s here.”
- Watch what you say. Little children have big ears and may pick up on your anxiety, misinterpret what they hear, or be frightened unnecessarily by things they do not understand.
- Maintain routines as much as possible. No matter what your living situation, do your best to have regular mealtimes and bedtimes. If you are homeless or have been relocated, create new routines. Try to do the things you have always done with your children, such as singing songs or saying prayers before they go to sleep.
- Give extra support at bedtime. Children who have been through trauma may become anxious at night. When you put your child to bed, spend more time than usual talking or telling stories. It’s okay to make a temporary arrangement for young children to sleep with you, but with the understanding that they will go back to normal sleeping arrangements at a set future date.
- Do not expose kids to the news. Young children tend to confuse facts with fears. They may not realize that the images they see on the news aren’t happening again and again. They should also not listen to the radio.
- Encourage children to share feelings. Try a simple question such as, “How are you feeling today?” Follow any conversations about the recent event with a favorite story or a family activity to help kids feel more safe and calm.
- Enable your child to tell the story of what happened. This will help her make sense of the event and cope with her feelings. Play can often be used to help your child frame the story and tell you about the event in her own words.
- Draw pictures. Young children often do well expressing emotions with drawing. This is another opportunity to provide explanations and reassurance. To start a discussion, you may comment on what a child has drawn.
- If your child acts out it may be a sign she needs extra attention. Help her name how she feels: Scared? Angry? Sad? Let her know it is okay to feel that way, then show her the right way to behave—you can say, “It’s okay to be angry, but it is not okay to hit your sister.”
- Get kids involved in activities. Distraction is a good thing for kids at this age. Play games with them, and arrange for playtime with other kids.
- Talk about things that are going well. Even in the most trying times, it’s important to identify something positive and express hope for the future to help your child recover.

You can say something like, “We still have each other. I am here with you, and I will stay with you.” Pointing out the good will help you feel better, too.

How to help kids ages 2 to 5 cope with the death of a loved one:

- Speak to them at their level. Use similar experiences to help children understand, such as the death of a pet or changes in flowers in the garden.
- Provide simple explanations. For example, “When someone dies, we can’t see them anymore but we can still look at them in pictures and remember them.”
- Reassure your children. They might feel what happened is their fault, somehow; let them know it is not.
- Expect repeated questions. That is how young children process information.

How to Help Children Ages 6-11

At this age, children are more able to talk about their thoughts and feelings and can better handle difficulties, but they still look to parents for comfort and guidance. Listening to them demonstrates your commitment. When scary things happen, seeing that parents can still parent may be the most reassuring thing for a frightened child.

Typical reactions of children ages 6 to 11:

- Anxiety
- Increased aggression, anger and irritability (like bullying or fighting with peers)
- Sleep and appetite disturbances
- Blaming themselves for the event
- Moodiness or crying
- Concerns about being taken care of
- Fear of future injury or death of loved ones
- Denying the event even occurred
- Complaints about physical discomfort, such as stomachaches, headaches, and lethargy, which may be due to stress
- Repeatedly asking questions
- Refusing to discuss the event (more typical among kids ages 9 to 11)
- Withdrawal from social interactions
- Academic problems: Trouble with memory and concentration at school, refusing to attend

What you can do to help:

- Reassure your child that he is safe. Children this age are comforted by facts. Use real words, such as hurricane, earthquake, flood, aftershock. For kids this age, knowledge is empowering and helps relieve anxiety.
- Keep things as “normal” as possible. Bedtime and mealtime routines help kids feel safe and secure. If you are homeless or have been relocated, establish different routines and give your child some choice in the matter—for example, let her choose which story to tell at bed- time. This gives a child a sense of control during an uncertain time.
- Limit exposure to TV, newspapers and radio. The more bad news school-age kids are exposed to, the more worried they will be. News footage can magnify the trauma of the event, so when a child does watch a news report or listen to the radio, sit with him so you can talk about it afterward. Avoid letting your child see graphic images.
- Spend time talking with your child. Let him know that it is okay to ask questions and to express concerns or sadness. One way to encourage conversation is to use family time (such as mealtime) to talk about what is happening in the family as well as in the community. Also ask what his friends have been saying, so you can make sure to correct any misinformation.
- Answer questions briefly but honestly. After a child has brought something up, first ask for his ideas so you can understand exactly what the concern is. Usually children ask a question because they are worried about something specific. Give a reassuring answer. If you do not know an answer to a question, it is okay to say, “I don’t know.” Do not speculate or repeat rumors.
- Draw out children who do not talk. Open a discussion by sharing your own feelings—for example, you could say, “This was a very scary thing, and sometimes I wake up in the night because I am thinking about it. How are you feeling?” Doing this helps your child feel he is not alone in his concerns or fears. However, do not give a lot of detail about your own anxieties.
- Keep children busy. Daily activities, such as playing with friends or going to school, may have been disrupted. Help kids think of alternative activities and organize playgroups with other parents.
- Calm worries about friends’ safety. Reassure your children that their friends’ parents are taking care of them just as they are being cared for by you.
- Talk about community recovery. Let children know that things are being done to keep them safe, or restore electricity and water, and that government and community groups are helping, if applicable.
- Encourage kids to lend a hand. This will give them a sense of accomplishment and purpose at a time when they may feel helpless. Younger children can do small tasks for you; older ones can contribute to volunteer projects in the community.
- Find the hope. Children need to see the future to recover. Kids this age appreciate specifics. For example, in the event of a natural disaster, you could say: “People from all over the country are sending medical supplies, food, and water. They’ve built new places where people who are hurt will be taken care of, and they will build new homes. It’ll be very hard like this only for just a little while.”

How to help kids ages 6 to 11 cope with the death of a loved one:

- Find out what your child is thinking. Ask questions before you make assumptions about what your child wants to know. For example, you can say, “It made me so upset when grandma died. What about you? It’s hard to think about, isn’t it?”
- Use real words. Avoid euphemisms for death like “He went to a better place.” School-age children are easily confused by vague answers. Instead, you can say, “Grandma has died, she is not coming back, and it is okay to feel sad about that.”
- Be as concrete as possible. Use simple drawings to describe things such as the body and injuries.
- Inform your child. Let her know that anger and sadness are typical, and that if she avoids feelings she may feel worse later on.
- Prepare your child for anticipated changes in routines or household functions. Talk about what the changes will mean for her.
- Reassure your child. Help her understand it is okay, and normal, to have trouble with school, peers, and family during this time.
- Encourage meaningful memorializing. Pray together as a family and take your child with you to church to light a candle. Your child might also want to write a letter to the deceased person or draw a picture you can hang up.
- Be patient. Kids up to age 11 may think death is reversible, and can have trouble accepting the fact that the person may not return. You might need to say repeatedly, “He died and is not coming back, and I am sad.”

How to Help Children Ages 12-18

Adolescence is already a challenging time for young people, who have so many changes happening in their bodies. They struggle with wanting more independence from parents, and have a tendency to feel nothing can harm them. Traumatic events can make them feel out of control, even if they act as if they are strong. They will also feel bad for people affected by the disaster, and have a strong desire to know why the event occurred.

Typical reactions of children ages 12 to 18:

- Avoidance of feelings
- Constant rumination about the disaster
- Distancing themselves from friends and family
- Anger or resentment
- Depression, and perhaps expression of suicidal thoughts
- Panic and anxiety, including worrying about the future
- Mood swings and irritability
- Changes in appetite and/or sleep habits
- Academic issues, such as trouble with memory and concentration, and/or refusing to attend school
- Participation in risky or illegal behavior, like drinking alcohol

What you can do:

- Make your teen feel safe again. Adolescents do not like to show vulnerability; they may try to act as if they are doing fine even though they are not. While they may resist hugs, your touch can help them feel secure. You can say something like, “I know you’re grown now, but I just need to give you a hug.”
- Help teens feel helpful. Give them small tasks and responsibilities in the household, then praise them for what they have done and how they have handled themselves. Do not overburden teens with too many responsibilities, especially adult-like ones, as that will add to their anxiety.
- Open the door for discussion. It’s very typical for teens to say they don’t want to talk. Try to start a conversation while you are doing an activity together, so that the conversation does not feel too intense or confrontational.
- Consider peer groups. Some teenagers may feel more comfortable talking in groups with their peers, so consider organizing one. Also encourage conversation with other trusted adults, like a relative or teacher.
- Limit exposure to TV, newspapers and radio. While teens can better handle the news than younger kids, those who are unable to detach themselves from TV or the radio may be trying to deal with anxiety in unhealthy ways. In any case, talk with your teen about the things she has seen or heard.
- Help your teen take action. Kids this age will want to help the community. Find appropriate volunteer opportunities.
- Be aware of substance abuse. Teens are particularly at risk for turning to alcohol or drugs to numb their anxiety. If your teen has been behaving secretly or is seemingly drunk or high, get in touch with a doctor. And talk to your teen in a kind way. For example, “People often drink or use drugs after a disaster to calm themselves or forget, but it can also cause more problems. Some other things you can do are take a walk, talk to me or your friends about how you feel, or write about your hopes for a better future.”

How to help kids ages 12 to 18 cope with the death of a loved one:

- Be patient. Teens may have a fear of expressing emotions about death. Encourage them to talk by saying something like, “I know it is horrible that grandma has died. Experts say it’s good to share our feelings. How are you doing?”
- Be very open. Discuss the ways you feel the death may be influencing her behavior.
- Be flexible. It is okay, at this time, to have a little more flexibility with rules and academic and behavioral expectations.
- Memorialize meaningfully. Pray together at home, let your teen light a candle at church, and include her in memorial ceremonies. She might also appreciate doing a private family tribute at home.

Signs of Trauma in Children and Adolescents

- Constantly replaying the event in their minds

- Nightmares
- Beliefs that the world is generally unsafe
- Irritability, anger and moodiness
- Poor concentration
- Appetite or sleep issues
- Behavior problems
- Nervousness about people getting too close
- Jumpiness from loud noises
- Regression to earlier behavior in young children, such as: clinging, bed-wetting or thumb-sucking
- Difficulty sleeping
- Detachment or withdrawal from others
- Use of alcohol or drugs in teens
- Functional impairment: Inability to go to school, learn, play with friends, etc.

Guía sobre cómo ayudar a los niños a lidiar con un evento traumático

Después de un evento traumático, el consuelo, el apoyo y la seguridad que reciban los niños de parte suya, puede ayudarlos a manejar sus miedos y a recuperarse de una manera saludable. Esta guía fue elaborada por psiquiatras, psicólogos y expertos en salud mental que se especializan en situaciones de crisis. Ofrece consejos simples sobre qué esperar, qué hacer y qué buscar. Si usted o sus hijos necesitan ayuda de un profesional de la salud mental, no dude en pedirle a un médico o a otro proveedor de atención a la salud que lo ayuden a encontrar a alguien.

Consejos para ayudar a los niños después del evento

- **Haga que su hijo se sienta a salvo.** Todos los niños, desde los más pequeños hasta los adolescentes, se beneficiarán del contacto físico con usted: caricias, abrazos o simplemente una palmada reconfortante en la espalda. Esto les brinda una sensación de seguridad, lo cual es fundamental después de un evento alarmante o perturbador. Para información específica sobre qué hacer y qué decir, consulte la guía por edad.
- **Actúe con calma.** Los niños buscan un refugio reconfortante en los adultos después de que han ocurrido eventos traumáticos. No hable de sus temores con sus hijos, o cuando ellos están cerca, y esté consciente del tono de su voz, ya que los niños perciben la ansiedad rápidamente.
- **Mantenga las rutinas tanto como sea posible.** En medio del caos y del cambio, las rutinas les aseguran a los niños que la vida volverá a estar bien. Trate de tener horarios regulares para comer y dormir. Si está sin hogar en este momento o acaba de mudarse, establezca nuevas rutinas. Y mantenga las mismas reglas familiares, como las que tienen que ver con el buen comportamiento.
- **Ayude a los niños a divertirse.** Anime a los niños a realizar actividades y jugar con otros. La distracción es buena para ellos y les brinda una sensación de normalidad.
- **Comparta información acerca de lo sucedido.** Siempre es mejor conocer los detalles de un evento traumático de parte de un adulto de confianza y en un ambiente seguro. Sea breve, honesto y permítale a los niños hacer preguntas. No asuma que a ellos les preocupan las mismas cosas que a los adultos.
- **Elija buenos momentos para hablar.** Busque oportunidades naturales para tratar el tema.
- **Prevenga o limite la exposición a las noticias sobre el evento.** Esto es especialmente importante con niños pequeños y en edad escolar, ya que el ver el recuento de los eventos perturbadores en televisión, en el periódico, o escucharlos en la radio, puede hacer que parezca como si continuaran sucediendo. Cuando los niños piensan que los eventos son temporales, pueden recuperarse más rápidamente.
- **Esté consciente de que los niños enfrentan las cosas de maneras diferentes.** Algunos querrán pasar más tiempo con sus amigos y familiares, otros

podrían querer pasar más tiempo a solas. Déjele saber a sus hijos que es normal sentir enojo, culpa y tristeza, y expresar sus sentimientos de maneras diferentes. Por ejemplo, una persona podría sentirse triste pero no necesariamente ponerse a llorar.

- **Escuche atentamente.** Es importante entender cómo ve la situación su hijo, y qué es confuso o inquietante para él o ella. No le dé todo un discurso, tan solo sea comprensivo. Hágales saber a los niños que en cualquier momento pueden acercarse a usted a decirle cómo se sienten.
- **Ayude a los niños a relajarse con ejercicios de respiración.** Cuando sentimos ansiedad, nuestra respiración se torna más superficial. Las respiraciones profundas pueden ayudar a los niños a calmarse. Usted puede sostener una pluma o un poco de algodón delante de la boca de su hijo y pedirle que lo sople con una exhalación lenta. O puede decir: “Inhalemos lentamente mientras cuento hasta tres, y luego exhalamos en tres”. Coloque un peluche o una almohada sobre el vientre de su hijo cuando está recostado, pídale que inhale y exhale lentamente mientras observan juntos cómo el peluche o la almohada sube y baja.
- **Reconozca lo que su hijo está sintiendo.** Si un niño confiesa una preocupación, no responda: “No te preocupes”, porque ellos podrían sentirse avergonzados o criticados. Simplemente confirme lo que está escuchando: “Sí, entiendo por qué estás preocupado”.
- **Sepa que está bien responder “no sé”.** Lo que más necesitan los niños es alguien de confianza que escuche sus preguntas, acepte sus sentimientos y esté ahí para ellos. No se preocupe si no sabe exactamente qué decir, después de todo, no hay una respuesta que haga que todo esté bien.

Consejos para ayudar a los niños a recuperarse de una manera saludable

- **Tenga en cuenta que las preguntas pueden seguir.** Debido a que las consecuencias de un desastre pueden incluir situaciones que cambian constantemente, los niños pueden tener preguntas en más de una ocasión. Hágales saber que usted está preparado para hablar en cualquier momento. Los niños necesitan digerir la información a su propio ritmo y las preguntas podrían surgir de la nada.
- **Estimule las conversaciones familiares acerca de la muerte de un ser querido.** Cuando las familias pueden hablar y sentirse tristes juntas, hay mayor probabilidad de que los niños compartan sus sentimientos.
- **No les dé a los niños demasiada responsabilidad.** Es muy importante no sobrecargar a los niños con tareas, o darles tareas de adultos, ya que esto podría ser muy estresante para ellos. En vez de eso, intente bajar sus expectativas respecto de lo que los niños pueden hacer en la casa y en la escuela, aunque es bueno que hagan al menos algunos quehaceres del hogar.
- **Proporcione ayuda especial a niños con necesidades especiales.** Estos niños podrían requerir más tiempo, apoyo y guía que otros niños. Es posible que tenga que simplificar el vocabulario que usa, y repetir las cosas con frecuencia. También es posible que necesite personalizar la información según la fortaleza de su hijo. Por ejemplo, un niño con una discapacidad del lenguaje puede que entienda mejor la información si se usan materiales visuales u otras maneras de comunicación a las que él esté acostumbrado.
- **Esté atento a señales de trauma.** Es común que los niños parezcan estar relativamente bien durante el primer mes. Después de eso, la sensación de anestesia desaparece y los niños podrían experimentar más síntomas, especialmente los niños que han presenciado lesiones o muerte, han perdido familiares cercanos, experimentaron trauma previamente en sus vidas, o han sido reubicados en un nuevo hogar.

- **Sepa cuándo pedir ayuda.** A pesar de que la ansiedad y otros problemas pueden durar meses, busque ayuda de inmediato con el médico de la familia o un profesional de salud mental si los problemas no disminuyen o si su hijo comienza a escuchar voces, ver cosas que no están ahí, se vuelve paranoico, experimenta ataques de pánico o tiene pensamientos de querer hacerse daño a sí mismo o a otras personas.
- **Cúidese.** Usted puede ayudar mejor a su hijo cuando se ayuda a sí mismo. Hable acerca de sus preocupaciones con sus amigos y familiares. Podría ser útil formar un grupo de apoyo. Si es miembro de una iglesia o grupo comunitario, continúe participando. Trate de comer bien, tome suficiente agua, mantenga las rutinas de ejercicio y duerma suficiente. La salud física protege contra la vulnerabilidad emocional. Para reducir el estrés, realice ejercicios de respiración profunda. Si sufre de ansiedad severa que interfiere con su capacidad para funcionar como siempre, debe buscar ayuda de un médico o profesional de la salud mental, y si no tiene acceso a uno, hable con su líder religioso. Reconozca su necesidad de ayuda y obténgala. Hágalo por el bien de su hijo.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 0 a 2 años

Los bebés perciben lo que usted está sintiendo y reaccionan en consecuencia. Si usted está calmado, su bebé se sentirá seguro. Si está ansioso y abrumado, su bebé podría reaccionar mostrándose inquieto, tener dificultad para calmarse, comer o dormir de manera irregular o podría volverse retraído.

Lo que usted puede hacer:

- **Trate al máximo de actuar de manera calmada.** Incluso si se siente estresado o ansioso, háblele a su bebé con una voz suave.
- **Responda de manera consistente a las necesidades de su bebé.** La tarea de desarrollo a esta edad es confiar en los cuidadores, de tal manera que los niños pueden desarrollar un apego fuerte y saludable.
- **Continúe amamantando si lo ha estado haciendo.** Aunque existe el mito de que cuando una madre experimenta una conmoción, su leche materna se pone mala y puede causar que el bebé sea “lento” o tenga discapacidades de aprendizaje, eso no es cierto. Es importante continuar amamantando a su bebé para mantenerlo saludable y conectado con usted. Usted necesita mantenerse saludable para poder amamantar, así que haga todo lo posible por comer y tomar agua.
- **Mire su bebé a los ojos.** Sonríale. Tóquelo. Estudios han demostrado que el contacto visual, el tacto y simplemente estar en la presencia de una madre, ayuda a mantener balanceadas las emociones de un bebé.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 2 a 5 años

A pesar de que los niños a esta edad tienen grandes avances en el desarrollo, todavía dependen de sus padres para que los cuiden. Igual que como ocurre con los bebés, generalmente responden a las situaciones conforme a la reacción de sus padres. Si usted está calmado y se muestra confiado, su hijo se sentirá más seguro. Si actúa ansioso o se muestra abrumado, su hijo podría sentirse inseguro.

Reacciones típicas en niños de 2 a 5 años:

- Hablar repetidamente acerca del evento o pretender “jugar” al evento.
- Rabietas o estallidos de irritabilidad.
- Llorar o estar al borde de las lágrimas.
- Más temores, generalmente a la oscuridad, los monstruos o a estar solos.
- Más sensibilidad a sonidos, como el de los truenos, el viento y otros ruidos fuertes.
- Alteraciones en la alimentación, el sueño y las visitas al baño.
- Creer que lo sucedido se puede revertir.
- Apego excesivo a los cuidadores y dificultad para separarse.
- Retroceder a comportamientos tempranos, como hablar como un bebé, orinarse en la cama y chuparse el dedo.

Lo que usted puede hacer:

- **Haga que su hijo se sienta a salvo.** Cárguelo, abrácelo, acurríquelo tanto como pueda. Dígale que usted lo cuidará si se sienta triste o tiene miedo. Con los niños que están aprendiendo a hablar, use frases simples como: “Mami está aquí”.
- **Fíjese en lo que dice.** Los niños pequeños tienen los oídos alerta y podrían detectar su ansiedad, malinterpretar lo que escuchan o sentirse atemorizados de manera innecesaria por las cosas que no entienden.
- **Mantenga las rutinas tanto como sea posible.** No importa cuál sea su situación de vida, haga todo lo posible por mantener horarios regulares para las comidas y para la hora de irse a dormir. Si no tiene vivienda en este momento o se ha mudado recientemente, cree nuevas rutinas. Trate de hacer las cosas que siempre ha hecho con sus hijos, tales como cantar o rezar antes de que se vayan a dormir.
- **Bríndeles apoyo extra a la hora de dormir.** Los niños que han experimentado un trauma podrían sentirse ansiosos en la noche. Cuando su hijo se vaya a la cama, dedique más tiempo de lo habitual a conversar o contar historias. Está bien permitir que los niños pequeños duerman con usted temporalmente, pero en el entendido de que en el futuro regresarán al arreglo habitual para la hora de dormir.
- **No exponga a los niños a las noticias.** Los niños pequeños tienden a confundir los hechos con los temores. Es posible que no se den cuenta de que las imágenes que ven en las noticias no están sucediendo una y otra vez. Tampoco es recomendable que escuchen la radio.
- **Anime a los niños a compartir sus sentimientos.** Empiece por hacerles una pregunta simple como: “¿Cómo te sientes hoy?”. Luego continúe cualquier conversación sobre el evento reciente con una historia favorita o una actividad familiar para ayudar a los niños a sentirse más seguros y calmados.
- **Permita que su hijo le cuente la historia de lo sucedido.** Esto lo ayudará a asimilar el evento y a lidiar con sus sentimientos. El juego a menudo se puede usar para ayudar a su hijo a enmarcar la historia y contarle a usted lo sucedido en sus propias palabras.
- **Hacer dibujos.** Los niños pequeños suelen expresar bien sus emociones con dibujos. Esta es otra oportunidad para darles explicaciones y reconfortarlos. Para iniciar una conversación, usted puede comentar acerca de lo que el niño haya dibujado.
- **Si su hijo se porta mal puede ser una señal de que necesita atención extra.** Ayúdelo a nombrar cómo se siente: ¿asustado? ¿enojado? ¿triste? Hágale saber que está bien que se sienta de esa manera, luego muéstrela la manera correcta de comportarse. Usted le puede decir: “Está bien estar enojados, pero no está bien golpear a tu hermana”.
- **Involucre a los niños en actividades.** La distracción es algo bueno para los niños a esta edad. Juegue con ellos y organice citas para que jueguen con otros niños.

- **Hable acerca de cosas que están yendo bien.** Aún en los momentos más difíciles, es importante identificar algo positivo y expresar esperanza en el futuro para ayudar a su hijo a recuperarse. Puede decirle algo como “todavía nos tenemos el uno al otro. Estoy aquí contigo y me quedaré contigo”. Señalar lo bueno también lo ayudará a usted a sentirse mejor.

Qué hacer para ayudar a los niños de 2 a 5 años a lidiar con la muerte de un ser querido:

- **Hable con ellos a su nivel.** Use experiencias similares para ayudar a los niños a entender, como la muerte de una mascota o los cambios en las flores del jardín.
- **Proporcione explicaciones simples.** Por ejemplo, “cuando alguien muere, no podemos verlos más, pero todavía podemos verlos en las fotos y recordarlos”.
- **Reconforte a sus hijos.** Ellos podrían sentir que lo sucedido de alguna manera es su culpa, déjeles saber que no lo es.
- **Espere repetición de preguntas.** Así es cómo los niños pequeños procesan la información.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 6 a 11 años

A esta edad, los niños pueden hablar más acerca de sus pensamientos y sentimientos y manejar mejor las dificultades, pero todavía se acercan a sus padres en búsqueda de consuelo y orientación. Al escucharlos usted les demuestra su compromiso. Cuando pasan cosas aterradoras, ver que los padres todavía los cuidan puede ser la cosa más reconfortante para un niño atemorizado.

Reacciones típicas en niños de 6 a 11 años:

- Ansiedad.
- Mayor agresividad, ira e irritabilidad (como el acoso o bullying y las peleas con sus compañeros).
- Alteración del sueño y el apetito.
- Culparse a ellos mismos por el evento.
- Mal humor o llanto.
- Preocupaciones sobre continuar recibiendo cuidado y protección.
- Miedo a un posible daño o a la muerte de seres queridos.
- Negar que el evento haya ocurrido.
- Quejas por molestias físicas, como dolores de estómago o de cabeza o letargo, que pueden ser debidos al estrés.
- Hacer preguntas repetidamente.
- Negarse a discutir el evento (más típico en niños de 9 a 11 años).
- Aislamiento de interacciones sociales.
- Dificultades académicas: problemas con la memoria y la concentración en la escuela o negarse a asistir.

Lo que puede hacer para ayudar a su hijo:

- **Asegúrele a su hijo que está a salvo.** Los niños de esta edad se sienten seguros con los hechos. Use palabras reales, como huracán, terremoto, inundación, réplicas. El conocimiento empodera a los niños de esta edad y los ayuda a liberar la ansiedad.

- **Mantenga las cosas tan “normales” como pueda.** Las rutinas de comer y acostarse ayudan a los niños a sentirse a salvo y seguros. Si está sin hogar en este momento o se ha mudado recientemente, establezca nuevas rutinas y dele a su hijo la posibilidad de decir algo al respecto. Por ejemplo, deje que elija qué historia se leerá a la hora de dormir. Esto le da al niño una sensación de control en momentos de incertidumbre.
- **Limite la exposición a la televisión, los periódicos y la radio.** Mientras más expuestos estén los niños en edad escolar a las malas noticias, más preocupados estarán. Las imágenes en las noticias pueden incrementar el trauma que ha causado el evento. Por lo tanto cuando los niños vean las noticias o las escuchen en la radio, siéntese con ellos para que después puedan hablar al respecto. Evite que sus hijos vean imágenes demasiado explícitas.
- **Dedique tiempo a hablar con su hijo.** Déjele saber que está bien que haga preguntas y exprese sus preocupaciones o su tristeza. Una manera de alentar la conversación es usar el tiempo que pasan juntos (como la hora de la cena) para hablar acerca de lo que está pasando en la familia y en la comunidad. Pregúntele también qué han estado diciendo sus amigos, para que así pueda asegurarse de corregir cualquier información errónea.
- **Responda a las preguntas de manera breve pero con honestidad.** Después de que un niño pone un tema sobre la mesa, pregúntele primero qué piensa para que usted pueda entender exactamente qué es lo que le preocupa. Usualmente los niños hacen preguntas porque están preocupados acerca de algo en específico. Dele una respuesta que lo tranquilice. Si usted no sabe la respuesta a una pregunta, está bien que les diga: “No lo sé”. No especule ni repita rumores.
- **Haga hablar a niños retraídos.** Usted puede abrir la conversación al compartir sus propios sentimientos. Por ejemplo, podría decir: “Esto fue algo muy aterrador. A veces me despierto en la noche porque estoy pensando en ello. ¿Cómo te sientes tú?”. Hacer esto ayuda a que su hijo sienta que no está solo en sus preocupaciones o miedos. Sin embargo, no le dé demasiados detalles sobre sus propias ansiedades.
- **Mantenga a los niños ocupados.** Es posible que las actividades diarias, como jugar con amigos o ir a la escuela se hayan interrumpido. Ayude a los niños a pensar en actividades alternativas y organice grupos de juego con otros padres.
- **Calme las preocupaciones por la seguridad de sus amigos.** Asegúrele a sus hijos que los padres de sus amigos los están cuidando tanto como usted los cuida a ellos.
- **Hable sobre la recuperación de la comunidad.** Hágale saber a los niños que se están haciendo cosas para mantenerlos a salvo, o para restaurar la electricidad y el agua, y que el gobierno y los grupos comunitarios están ayudando, si esto aplica.
- **Anime a los niños a ayudar.** Esto les dará una sensación de realización y de tener un propósito en un momento en el que pueden sentirse desamparados. Los niños más pequeños pueden realizar tareas pequeñas en la casa, los mayores pueden contribuir en proyectos voluntarios en la comunidad.
- **Encuentre esperanza.** Los niños necesitan ver el futuro para recuperarse. Los niños de esta edad aprecian las cosas específicas. Por ejemplo, en el caso de un desastre natural, usted podría decirles: “Personas de todo el país están enviando materiales médicos, comida y agua. Han construido lugares nuevos donde se atenderá a los heridos y construirán casas nuevas. Seguirá siendo difícil pero solo por un tiempo corto”.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 6 a 11 años a sobrellevar la muerte de un ser querido:

- **Descubra qué está pensando su hijo.** Haga preguntas antes de hacer suposiciones acerca de lo que su hijo quiere saber. Por ejemplo, usted puede decir: “Me molestó

mucho cuando murió la abuela. ¿Tú cómo te has sentido? Es difícil pensar en ello, ¿verdad que sí?”

- **Use palabras reales.** Evite los eufemismos o sinónimos de la muerte para intentar suavizar las cosas, como decir: “Se fue a un mejor lugar”. Los niños en edad escolar se confunden fácilmente con respuestas vagas. En vez de eso, usted puede decir: “La abuela ha muerto, no va a regresar y está bien que nos sintamos tristes por eso”.
- **Sea lo más concreto posible.** Use dibujos simples para describir cosas como el cuerpo y las lesiones.
- **Informe a su hijo.** Déjele saber a su hijo que el enojo y la tristeza son típicos en situaciones como esta, y que si los niños evitan esos sentimientos se pueden sentir peor más adelante.
- **Prepare con anticipación a sus hijos para cambios en la rutina o el funcionamiento del hogar.** Hable acerca de lo que significarán los cambios para ellos.
- **Tranquile a su hijo.** Ayúdelo a entender que está bien, y que es normal, tener problemas durante este tiempo en la escuela, con sus compañeros y con la familia.
- **Estimule la conmemoración significativa.** Oren juntos como familia y lleve a su hijo a la iglesia para encender una vela. Su hijo podría también querer escribir una carta para la persona que ha fallecido o hacer un dibujo que usted puede colgar en la pared.
- **Sea paciente.** Los niños hasta los 11 años pueden pensar que la muerte es reversible, y pueden tener problemas para aceptar el hecho de que la persona no puede regresar. Usted podría tener que decir repetidas veces: “Murió, no va a regresar y estoy triste”.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 12 a 18 años

La adolescencia es de por sí una época difícil para los jóvenes, en la que atraviesan por muchos cambios en sus cuerpos. Quieren mayor independencia de sus padres y suelen sentir que nada puede dañarlos. Los eventos traumáticos pueden hacerlos sentir fuera de control, incluso si se hacen los fuertes. También se sienten mal por las personas que han sido afectadas por el desastre y tienen un fuerte deseo de saber por qué ocurrió el evento .

Reacciones típicas de niños entre 12 y 18 años:

- Evitar los sentimientos.
- Pensar constantemente en el desastre.
- Alejarse de amigos y familiares.
- Enojo o resentimiento.
- Depresión, y tal vez pensamientos suicidas.
- Pánico y ansiedad, incluyendo preocupación por el futuro.
- Cambios de humor e irritabilidad.
- Cambios en el apetito y/o los hábitos de sueño.
- Dificultades académicas, como problemas con la memoria y la concentración, y/o rechazo a la escuela.
- Participar en comportamientos riesgosos o ilegales, como tomar alcohol.

Lo que usted puede hacer:

- **Haga que su adolescente se sienta a salvo otra vez.** A los adolescentes no les gusta mostrarse vulnerables. Podrían actuar como si estuvieran bien aunque no lo estén.

A pesar de que es posible que se resistan a los abrazos, el contacto con usted puede ayudarlos a sentirse seguros. Usted puede decir algo como: “Sé que ya estás grande, pero yo necesito darte un abrazo”.

- **Ayude a los adolescentes a sentirse útiles:** Asígneles tareas pequeñas y responsabilidades en el hogar, luego felicítelos por lo que han hecho y cómo se han manejado. No sobrecargue a los adolescentes con demasiadas responsabilidades, especialmente aquellas que son para adultos, ya que eso aumentará su ansiedad.
- **Abra la puerta para la conversación.** Es muy típico que los adolescentes digan que no quieren hablar. Trate de iniciar una conversación mientras hacen algo juntos, para que la conversación no se sienta demasiado intensa o agresiva.
- **Considere los grupos de jóvenes de su edad.** Algunos adolescentes pueden sentirse más cómodos al hablar en grupo con otros jóvenes, así que considere organizar uno. También estimule la conversación con otros adultos de confianza, como un familiar o maestro.
- **Limite la exposición a la televisión, los periódicos y la radio.** A pesar de que los adolescentes pueden manejar las noticias de mejor manera que los niños más pequeños, aquellos jóvenes que no pueden desprenderse de la televisión o la radio podrían estar tratando de lidiar con la ansiedad de maneras poco saludables. Cualquiera que sea el caso, hable con su adolescente acerca de las cosas que ha visto o escuchado.
- **Ayude a su hijo a actuar:** Los niños de esta edad querrán ayudar en la comunidad. Busque oportunidades de voluntariado que sean apropiadas.
- **Esté atento a un posible abuso de sustancias.** Los adolescentes están especialmente en riesgo de recurrir al alcohol o las drogas para calmar su ansiedad. Si su adolescente ha estado actuando de manera reservada o parece estar borracho o drogado, póngase en contacto con un médico. Y hable con su adolescente de una manera amable. Por ejemplo, “las personas a menudo beben alcohol o usan drogas después de un desastre para calmarse o para olvidar, pero esas sustancias pueden causar más problemas. Algunas otras cosas que puedes hacer son ir a caminar, hablar conmigo o con tus amigos sobre cómo te sientes, o escribir tus expectativas y sueños para un futuro mejor”.

Cómo ayudar a los niños de 12 a 18 años a lidiar con la muerte de un ser querido:

- **Sea paciente.** Los adolescentes pueden tener miedo de expresar sus emociones acerca de la muerte. Anímelos a hablar diciéndoles algo como: “Sé que es horrible que la abuela haya muerto. Los expertos dicen que es bueno compartir nuestros sentimientos. ¿Tú cómo te has sentido?”.
- **Sea muy abierto.** Háblele acerca de las maneras que usted siente que la muerte puede estar influyendo en su comportamiento actual.
- **Sea flexible.** Está bien tener un poco más de flexibilidad con las reglas en momentos como estos, así como con las expectativas académicas y de comportamiento.
- **Conmemorar de manera significativa.** Oren juntos en casa, deje que su adolescente vaya a la iglesia a encender una vela, e inclúyalo en las ceremonias conmemorativas. También podría hacer un homenaje familiar en casa.

Señales de trauma en niños y adolescentes

- Revivir constantemente el evento.
- Pesadillas.
- Pensar que el mundo es generalmente inseguro.

- Irritabilidad, enojo y cambios de humor.
- Poca concentración.
- Problemas alimenticios o de sueño.
- Problemas de comportamiento.
- Ponerse nervioso si las personas se les acercan mucho.
- Asustarse con los ruidos fuertes.
- En niños pequeños, regresión a comportamientos previos, como estar demasiado apegado, orinarse en la cama o chuparse el dedo.
- Dificultad para dormir.
- Desinterés o distanciamiento de otros.
- Uso de alcohol y/o drogas en adolescentes.
- Impedimento funcional: incapacidad de ir a la escuela, de aprender, de jugar con amigos, etc.



Talking to Children about Disasters

Children can cope more effectively with a disaster when they feel they understand what is happening and what they can do to help protect themselves, family, and friends. Provide basic information to help them understand, without providing unnecessary details that may only alarm them.



- **Very Young Children:** Provide concrete explanations of what happened and how it will affect them (*e.g., a tree branch fell on electrical wires and that is why the lights do not work*). Let children know there are many people who are working to help them and their community to recover after a disaster (*such as repair crews for the electric company, or firefighters, police, paramedics, or other emergency personnel*). Share with them all of the steps that are being taken to keep them safe; children will often worry that a disaster will occur again.
- **Older Children:** They will likely want, and benefit from, additional information about the disaster and recovery efforts. No matter what age, start by asking children what they already know and what questions they have and use that as a guide for the conversation. Limit media coverage of the disaster (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Talking-To-Children-About-Tragedies-and-Other-News-Events.aspx>)—if children are going to watch media coverage, consider taping it (*to allow adults to preview*) and watch along with them to answer questions and help them process the information. While children may seek and benefit from basic information about what happened so that they can understand what is happening in their world, they (*and adults*) do not benefit from graphic details or exposure to disturbing images or sounds. In the aftermath of a crisis is a good time to disconnect from all media and sit down together and talk as a family.

Be sure to ask children what questions or concerns they have. Often they have fears based on limited information or because they misunderstood what they were told. Reassure children when able to do so, but if their fears are realistic, do not give false reassurance. Instead, help them learn how to cope with these feelings. See the following articles for more information:

- How Children of Different Ages Respond to Disasters (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/How-Children-of-Different-Ages-Respond-to-Disasters.aspx>)
- Responding to Children's Emotional Needs during Times of Crisis (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Responding-to-Childrens-Emotional-Needs-During-Times-of-Crisis.aspx>)

How Parents Can Help Children Cope:

After a disaster or crisis, children benefit from adults who can help them learn how to cope effectively. Although it is not useful for adults to appear overwhelmed by the event, it is helpful for them to share some of their feelings and what they are doing to deal with those feelings. Children cannot be expected to cope with troubling feelings if no one models effective coping. Allow children to "own" their feelings.

- **Let your child know that it is all right to be upset about something bad that happened.** Use the conversation to take the opportunity to talk about other troubling feelings your child may have. A child who feels afraid is afraid, even if adults think the reason for the fear is unnecessary.
- **If you feel overwhelmed and/or hopeless,** look for some support from other adults before reaching out to your child. See the following articles for more information:
 - Taking Care of Yourself during Disasters: Info for Parents (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Taking-Care-of-Yourself-during-Disasters-Info-for-Parents.aspx>)
 - When Things Aren't Perfect: Caring for Yourself & Your Children (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/When-Things-Arent-Perfect-Caring-for-Yourself-Your-Children.aspx>)
- **Don't feel obligated to give a reason for what happened.** Although adults often feel the need to provide a reason for why someone committed such a crime, many times they do not know. It is okay to tell your child that you do not know why at this time such a crime, for example, was committed.

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- **Allow children to express their regrets over "secondary losses"** (*without accusing them of being selfish*) and help them figure out ways to minimize the impact or find alternatives. Children are not only trying to deal with the disaster, but with everything else that follows. They may have to relocate, at least temporarily, and could be separated from friends or unable to attend the same school. Parents may have less income and the change in finances may impact their ability to participate in activities they enjoyed or travel to visit family out of town.

Getting Involved in Your Community:

Children, just like adults, often feel helpless after a disaster. Help them figure out what they can do—that is meaningful to them—to help others in their community impacted by the disaster. See the following articles for more information:

- **Creating Opportunities for Children & Teens to Contribute** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Creating-Opportunities-for-Children-Teens-to-Contribute.aspx>)
- **Helping Teens Connect With Their Community** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Helping-Teens-Connect-With-Their-Community.aspx>)
- **Community-Based Resilience-Building** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Community/Pages/Community-Based-Resilience-Building.aspx>)
- **How to Inspire Generosity in Children** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Community/Pages/How-to-Inspire-Generosity-in-Children.aspx>)

How to Support Grieving Children:

Children who have experienced the death of a family member or friend need to understand and grieve a personal loss, above and beyond adjusting to the disaster itself. See the following articles for more information on how to support grieving children:

- **Attending Funerals or Memorial Services** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Attending-Funerals-or-Memorial-Services.aspx>)
- **Grieving: What's Normal & When to Worry** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Grieving-Whats-Normal-When-to-Worry.aspx>)
- **How Children Understand Death & What You Should Say** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/How-Children-Understand-Death-What-You-Should-Say.aspx>)
- **Honoring the Memory: Making the World a Better Place** (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Honoring-the-Memory-Making-the-World-a-Better-Place.aspx>)

Talking to Children in the Aftermath of Violence:

Click here (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Offers-Resources-to-Help-Parents,-Children-and-Others-Cope-in-the-Aftermath-of-School-Violence.aspx>) for resources and information to help children cope with the aftermath of community or school shootings.

If you have concerns about your child's behavior (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/Pages/Normal-Child-Behavior.aspx>), contact his or her pediatrician, other primary care provider, or a qualified mental health care specialist (<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Mental-Health-Care-Who%27s-Who.aspx>).

Additional Resources:

- **Tips for Talking to Children After a Disaster** (<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA11-DISASTER/SMA11-DISASTER-09.pdf>) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- **Help in Times of Crisis** (<http://www.schoolcrisiscenter.org/>) (National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement)
- **Catastrophic Mass Violence Resources** (<http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/terrorism>) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- **Tips for Talking to Children in Trauma** (http://www.samhsa.gov/MentalHealth/Tips%20for%20Talking%20to%20Children%20in%20Trauma_LOW_RES.pdf) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

Last Updated 9/16/2015

Source American Academy of Pediatrics (Copyright © 2014)

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

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Cómo hablarles a los niños sobre los desastres

Los niños pueden afrontar más eficazmente un desastre cuando sienten que comprenden lo que está ocurriendo y lo que pueden hacer para ayudar a protegerse a sí mismos, a la familia y a los amigos. Brinde información básica para ayudarles a entender, sin proporcionar detalles innecesarios que pueden sólo alarmarlos.



- **Niños muy pequeños:** brinde explicaciones concretas de lo que ocurrió y cómo les va a afectar (por ejemplo, la rama de un árbol cayó sobre los cables eléctricos y es por eso que las luces no funcionan). Dígale a los niños que hay muchas personas trabajando para ayudarles a ellos y a su comunidad a recuperarse después de un desastre (tales como equipos de reparaciones de la empresa eléctrica o bomberos, policías, paramédicos u otro personal de emergencia). Coménteles todos los pasos que se van a tomar para mantenerlos seguros; a menudo los niños se preocupan de que un desastre vuelva a ocurrir.
- **Niños mayores:** Se pueden beneficiar de información adicional sobre el desastre y sobre los esfuerzos de recuperación. Independientemente de la edad, empiece por preguntarles a los niños qué es lo que saben y qué preguntas tienen y utilice esta información como una guía para la conversación. Restrinja la cobertura de los medios de comunicación sobre el desastre (</spanish/family-life/media/paginas/talking-to-children-about-tragedies-and-other-news-events.aspx>), si los niños van a ver la cobertura, trate de grabarla antes (para permitir que los adultos la vean primero) y después véanla juntos para responder a sus preguntas y ayudarles a procesar la información. Aunque los niños buscan y se benefician de la información básica sobre lo que ha pasado para poder entender lo que acontece en su mundo no (y los adultos tampoco) se benefician de los detalles gráficos o de ser expuestos a imágenes perturbadoras o sonidos alarmantes. Después de la crisis es bueno desconectarse de los medios de comunicación para hablar juntos en familia.

Cerciórese de preguntarles a los niños si tienen preguntas o si algo les preocupa. A menudo, ellos tienen temores basados en la información incompleta o porque malinterpretan lo que les dijeron. Tranquilice a los niños cuando pueda hacerlo, pero si sus temores son realistas, no les dé falsas esperanzas. En cambio enséñeles cómo hacerle frente a estos sentimientos. Lea el siguiente artículo para más información:

- [Cómo responder a las necesidades emocionales de los niños en momentos de crisis \(/spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/paginas/responding-to-childrens-emotional-needs-during-times-of-crisis.aspx\)](/spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/paginas/responding-to-childrens-emotional-needs-during-times-of-crisis.aspx)

Cómo pueden los padres ayudar a los niños a enfrentar situaciones difíciles:

Después de un desastre o crisis, los niños aprenden de los adultos a cómo enfrentar estas situaciones eficazmente. Aunque no es bueno que los niños vean a los adultos abrumados por el evento, si es bueno compartir algunos de sus sentimientos cómo están lidiando con estos sentimientos. No se puede esperar que los niños enfrenten sentimientos difíciles si no hay un modelo o ejemplo que puedan seguir. Permítales a los niños tener sus propios sentimientos.

- **Dígale a su niño que es normal sentirse alterado cuando algo malo pasa.** Aproveche la oportunidad para hablar con su niño sobre otros sentimientos que pueden estar sintiendo. Un niño puede sentir miedo aunque los adultos crean que no hay razón para temer.
- **Si usted se siente abrumado o desesperado,** busque apoyo de otros adultos antes de hablar con su niño.
- **No sienta que tiene la obligación de dar una explicación por lo que ha pasado.** Aunque algunos adultos creen que deben explicar la razón por la que una persona cometió tal crimen, muchas veces no hay explicaciones. Es mejor decirle a su niño que usted no sabe en este momento por qué se ha cometido ese crimen.
- **Permita que su niño exprese su pesar por "pérdidas derivadas o secundarias"** (*sin acusarlos de ser egoístas*) y ayúdeles a encontrar formas para reducir el impacto o para encontrar alternativas. Los niños no solo están tratando de entender el desastre pero lo que pasa después (consecuencias). Tal vez tengan que mudarse, por lo menos durante un tiempo, y puede que se tengan que separar de sus amigos, o de ir a la misma escuela. Los padres pueden quedar afectados económicamente y estos cambios pueden afectar la participación de los niños en actividades que disfrutaban o de viajar a visitar a los familiares que viven fuera de la ciudad.

Participe en su comunidad:

Ir arriba

Los niños, así como los adultos, a veces se sienten desamparados después de un desastre. Ayúdeles a hacer algo que sea de valor para ellos--ayudar a otros que ha sido víctimas de un desastre. Lea los siguientes artículos al respecto:

- [Cómo construir resiliencia en la comunidad \(/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/community-based-resilience-building.aspx\)](/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/community-based-resilience-building.aspx)
- [Cómo infundir la generosidad en los niños \(/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/how-to-inspire-generosity-in-children.aspx\)](/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/how-to-inspire-generosity-in-children.aspx)

Cómo brindar apoyo a las familias afligidas:

Los niños que han sufrido la muerte de un familiar o un amigo necesitan primero procesarlo y lamentar su pérdida, por encima y más allá de adaptarse a la propia catástrofe. Para más información los siguientes artículos:

- [Cómo construir resiliencia en la comunidad \(/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/community-based-resilience-building.aspx\)](/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/community-based-resilience-building.aspx)
- [Cómo infundir la generosidad en los niños \(/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/how-to-inspire-generosity-in-children.aspx\)](/spanish/family-life/community/paginas/how-to-inspire-generosity-in-children.aspx)

Cómo hablarle a los niños tras hechos de violencia

Si le preocupa el comportamiento (</spanish/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/paginas/normal-child-behavior.aspx>) de su niño, contacte a su pediatra o a un proveedor de salud primaria o a un profesional de salud mental. (</spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/paginas/mental-health-care-who%27s-who.aspx>)

Última actualización 8/31/2017

Fuente American Academy of Pediatrics (Copyright © 2014)

La información contenida en este sitio web no debe usarse como sustituto al consejo y cuidado médico de su pediatra. Puede haber muchas variaciones en el tratamiento que su pediatra podría recomendar basado en hechos y circunstancias individuales.



Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event:

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CAREGIVERS, AND TEACHERS

Adult support and reassurance is the key to helping children through a traumatic time.

Children and youth can face emotional strains after a traumatic event such as a car crash or violence.¹ Disasters also may leave them with long-lasting harmful effects.² When children experience a trauma, watch it on TV, or overhear others discussing it, they can feel scared, confused, or anxious. Young people react to trauma differently than adults. Some may react right away; others may show signs that they are having a difficult time much later. As such, adults do not always know when a child needs help coping. This tip sheet will help parents, caregivers, and teachers learn some common reactions, respond in a helpful way, and know when to seek support.

Possible Reactions to a Disaster or Traumatic Event

Many of the reactions noted below are normal when children and youth are handling the stress right after an event. If any of these behaviors lasts for more than 2 to 4 weeks, or if they suddenly appear later on, these children may need more help coping. Information about where to find help is in the **Helpful Resources** section of this tip sheet.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0–5 YEARS OLD

Very young children may go back to thumb sucking or wetting the bed at night after a trauma. They may fear strangers, darkness, or monsters. It is fairly common for preschool children to become clingy with a parent, caregiver, or teacher or to want to stay in a place where they feel safe. They may express the trauma repeatedly in their play or tell exaggerated stories about what happened. Some children's eating and sleeping habits may change. They also may have aches and pains that cannot be explained. Other symptoms to watch for are aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience.

- **Infants and Toddlers, 0–2 years old,** cannot understand that a trauma is happening, but they know when their caregiver is upset. They may start to show the same emotions as their caregivers, or they may act differently, like crying for no reason, withdrawing from people, and not playing with their toys.
- **Children, 3–5 years old,** can understand the effects of trauma. They may have trouble adjusting to change and loss. They may depend on the adults around them to help them feel better.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE, 6–19 YEARS OLD

Children and youth in these age ranges may have some of the same reactions to trauma as younger children. Often, younger children want much more attention from parents or caregivers. They may stop doing their school work or chores at home. Some youth may feel helpless and guilty because they cannot take on adult roles as their family or the community responds to a trauma or disaster.

- **Children, 6–10 years old,** may fear going to school and stop spending time with friends. They may have trouble paying attention and do poorly in school overall. Some may become aggressive for no clear reason. Or they may act younger than their age by asking to be fed or dressed by their parent or caregiver.
- **Youth and Adolescents, 11–19 years old,** go through a lot of physical and emotional changes because of their developmental stage. So, it may be even harder for them to cope with trauma. Older teens may deny their reactions to themselves and their caregivers. They may respond with a routine “I’m okay” or even silence when they are upset. Or, they may complain about physical aches or pains because they cannot identify what is really bothering them emotionally. Some may start arguments at home and/or at school, resisting any structure or authority. They also may engage in risky behaviors such as using alcohol or drugs.

How Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers Can Support Children’s Recovery

The good news is that children and youth are usually quite resilient. Most of the time they get back to feeling okay soon after a trauma. With the right support from the adults around them, they can thrive and recover. The most important ways to help are to make sure children feel connected, cared about, and loved.

- Parents, teachers, and other caregivers can help children express their emotions through conversation, writing, drawing, and singing. Most children want to talk about a trauma, so let them. Accept their feelings and tell them it is okay to feel sad, upset, or stressed. Crying is often a way to relieve stress and grief. **Pay attention and be a good listener.**
- Adults can ask the teens and youth they are caring for what they know about the event. What are they hearing in school or seeing on TV? Try to watch news coverage on TV or the Internet with them. And, limit access so they have time away from reminders about the trauma. Don’t let talking about the trauma take over the family or classroom discussion for long periods of time. **Allow them to ask questions.**
- Adults can help children and youth see the good that can come out of a trauma. Heroic actions, families and friends who help, and support from people in the community are examples. Children may better cope with a trauma or disaster by helping others. They can write caring letters to those who have been hurt or have lost their homes; they can send thank you notes to people who helped. **Encourage these kinds of activities.**
- If human violence or error caused an event, be careful not to blame a cultural, racial, or ethnic group, or persons with psychiatric disabilities. This may be a good opportunity to talk with children about discrimination and diversity. **Let children know that they are not to blame when bad things happen.**
- It’s okay for children and youth to see adults sad or crying, but try not to show intense emotions. Screaming and hitting or kicking furniture or walls can be scary for children. **Violence can further frighten children or lead to more trauma.³**
- Adults can show children and youth how to take care of themselves. If you are in good physical and emotional health, you are more likely to be readily available to support the children you care about. **Model self-care, set routines, eat healthy meals, get enough sleep, exercise, and take deep breaths to handle stress.**

Tips for Talking With Children and Youth of Different Age Groups After a Disaster or Traumatic Event

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN, 0–5 YEARS OLD

Give these very young children a lot of cuddling and verbal support:

- Take a deep breath before holding or picking them up, and focus on them, not the trauma.
- Get down to their eye level and speak in a calm, gentle voice using words they can understand.
- Tell them that you still care for them and will continue to take care of them so they feel safe.

EARLY CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE, 6–19 YEARS OLD

Nurture children and youth in this age group:

- Ask your child or the children in your care what worries them and what might help them cope.
 - Offer comfort with gentle words, a hug when appropriate, or just your presence.
 - Spend more time with the children than usual, even for a short while. Returning to school activities and getting back to routines at home is important too.
 - Excuse traumatized children from chores for a day or two. After that, make sure they have age-appropriate tasks and can participate in a way that makes them feel useful.
 - Support children spending time with friends or having quiet time to write or create art.
 - Encourage children to participate in recreational activities so they can move around and play with others.
- Address your own trauma in a healthy way. Avoid hitting, isolating, abandoning, or making fun of children.
 - Let children know that you care about them—spend time doing something special with them, and make sure to check on them in a nonintrusive way.



A NOTE OF CAUTION: *Be careful not to pressure children to talk about a trauma or join in expressive activities. While most children will easily talk about what happened, some may become frightened. Some may even get traumatized again by talking about it, listening to others talk about it, or looking at drawings of the event. Allow children to remove themselves from these activities, and monitor them for signs of distress.*

Helpful Resources

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Technical Assistance Center (SAMHSA DTAC)
Toll-Free: 1-800-308-3515
Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/dtac>

Treatment Locators

Mental Health Treatment Facility Locator
Toll-Free: 1-800-789-2647 (English and español)
TDD: 1-866-889-2647
Website: <http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/MHTreatmentLocator>

MentalHealth.gov
Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.gov>
MentalHealth.gov provides U.S. government information and resources on mental health.

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
Toll-Free: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)
(24/7 English and español); TDD: 1-800-487-4889
Website: <http://www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov>

Hotlines

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
Toll-Free: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY (1-800-799-4889)
Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov>
This resource can be found by accessing the Suicide Prevention Lifeline box once on the SAMHSA website.

Disaster Distress Helpline
Toll-Free: 1-800-985-5990 Text "TalkWithUs" to 66746
Website: <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov>

Child Welfare Information Gateway
Toll-Free: 1-800-4-A-CHILD (1-800-422-4453)
Website: <http://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/how.cfm>

Additional Behavioral Health Resources

National Child Traumatic Stress Network
Website: <http://www.samhsa.gov/traumaJustice>
This behavioral health resource can be accessed by visiting the SAMHSA website and then selecting the related link.

Administration for Children and Families
Website: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

When Children, Youth, Parents, Caregivers, or Teachers Need More Help

In some instances, a child and his or her family may have trouble getting past a trauma. Parents or caregivers may be afraid to leave a child alone. Teachers may see that a student is upset or seems different. It may be helpful for everyone to work together. Consider talking with a mental health professional to help identify the areas of difficulty. Together, everyone can decide how to help and learn from each other. If a child has lost a loved one, consider working with someone who knows how to support children who are grieving.⁴ Find a caring professional in the **Helpful Resources** section of this tip sheet.

- ¹ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (n.d.). Traffic safety facts, 2003 data: Children. (DOT HS 809 762). Washington, DC: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Retrieved from <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/809762.pdf>.
- ^{2,4} National Commission on Children and Disasters. (2010). National Commission on Children and Disasters: 2010 report to the President and Congress. (AHRQ Publication No. 10-MO37). Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. Retrieved from <http://archive.ahrq.gov/prep/nccdreport/nccdreport.pdf>.
- ³ Children's Bureau. (2010). Child maltreatment 2009. Washington, DC: Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/resource/child-maltreatment-2009>.



HHS Publication No. SMA-12-4732
(Revised 2013)



How Families Can Cope with Relocation Stress After a Disaster

Unplanned evacuations during a disaster can cause great stress on a community and on the individuals in that community.

First Steps of Recovery

Recovering from a disaster occurs in phases over days, weeks, and months. Soon after being uprooted by a disaster, families can start the recovery process. Right now, there are three general steps to take to improve the mental and emotional strength of the family.

The following steps will help everyone to begin to retake control over life:



- **Step 1: Rebuild physical strength and health.** Once everyone is in a safe and secure place, whether a shelter, a new apartment, or a place with relatives or friends, make sure to tend to their immediate medical needs, if any. Be sure everyone has enough to eat and drink to regain their physical strength. Make sure everyone gets some restful sleep in as private a space as possible. Rebuilding physical strength is a good first step to calm shattered emotions.
- **Step 2: Restore daily activities.** Restoring daily routines helps build a sense of being home mentally and emotionally, even in the absence of a physical home. Simple routines normally done together, such as family walks, watching television, and bedtime stories, help pull the pieces of daily life back together even in a new place. Restoring daily activities rebuilds the normal sense of morning, afternoon, evening, and night. Even though you are away from home and in a strange place, try to resume the daily routines as much as possible.
- **Step 3: Provide comfort.** Family members are better able to deal with the stress of relocation when they are comfortable and informed. Comfort can be increased by
 - Providing family with information about other family members, friends, and news of home.
 - Expressing affection for family members, in the ways the family normally shows affection.
 - Discussing, when ready, the emotions associated with the disaster and relocation feelings of loss, missing home, and worry about family members, friends, and pets.

Rebuilding Family Life

After the initial emergency has passed and the shock and confusion from disaster relocation have subsided, the physical rebuilding and long-term emotional recovery phase begins.

This longer recovery phase has two steps:

- **Assess all physical and emotional losses your family has experienced.** This inventory can help identify practical actions to take in rebuilding the physical losses the family has experienced.
- **Develop an emotional understanding of the disaster experience and relocation situation to help rebuild family life.** Working through emotions takes time. There is no set timeframe or stages for it.

Resolving emotions is a natural healing process that relies on talking to friends about feelings, mental sorting of emotions, and receiving practical and emotional help from family, friends, your place of worship, or other organized support groups in the community.

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About Disaster-Related Stress in Children

Disaster-related stress affects young people in several ways:

- Damage, injuries, and deaths that result from an unexpected or uncontrollable event are difficult for most children to understand.
- Following a disaster, a child's view of the world as safe and predictable is temporarily lost. This is true of adults as well.
- Children express their feelings and reactions in various ways, especially in different age groups.

Many are confused about what has happened and about their feelings. Not every child has immediate reactions; some can have delayed reactions that show up days, weeks, or even months later, and some may never have a reaction. Children's reactions are strongly affected by the emotional reactions of their parents and the adults around them. In addition, children can easily become afraid that a similar event will happen again and that they or their family will be injured or killed.

How Children Show Disaster-Related Stress

It is normal for young people to show signs of stress after a disaster. Young people show signs of stress differently at different ages or school levels.

Signs of stress in preschoolers:

- Waking confused and frightened from bad dreams
- Being reluctant to going to bed or refusing to sleep alone
- Acting and showing behaviors younger than their actual age, such as whining, thumb sucking, bedwetting, baby talk or fear of darkness
- Clinging to adults more than normal
- Complaining often about illnesses such as stomachaches
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Being irritable

Signs of stress in elementary or middle school age:

- Ongoing concern over their own safety and the safety of others in their school or family
- Irrational fears
- Becoming extremely upset for little or no reason
- Having nightmares and sleep problems
- Experiencing problems in school, such as skipping school or misbehavior (e.g., loss of interest, withdrawal, and excessive need for attention)
- Complaining of headaches or stomachaches without cause
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Disruptive behaviors-outbursts of anger and fighting
- Being numb to their emotions
- Experiencing guilt or shame about what they did or did not do during the disaster

Signs of stress in high school age:

- Feeling self-conscious about their feelings concerning the disaster
- Feeling fearful, helpless, and concerned about being labeled "abnormal" or different from their friends or classmates (this may lead to social withdrawal)

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- Experiencing shame or guilt about the disaster
- Expressing fantasies about retribution concerning people connected to disaster events
- Not having fun doing things they normally enjoyed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Impulsive behaviors
- Emotional numbing
- Seeing the world as an unsafe place

When Children May Need Additional Help

Situations may develop when children need additional help dealing with emotional after-effects of the disaster. They may benefit from help from a healthcare professional if the emotional stress associated with the disaster does not get better in a few weeks or when they:

- Display continual and aggressive emotional outbursts
- Show serious problems at school (e.g., fighting, skipping school, arguments with teachers, or food fights)
- Withdraw completely from family and friends
- Cannot cope with routine problems or daily activities
- Engage in vandalism or juvenile law-breaking activities
- Express suicidal ideas

Reaching out for help is not a sign of weakness. People have limits and sometimes need help when stretched beyond their limits. Seeking help from others can offer solutions that may not be known to you.

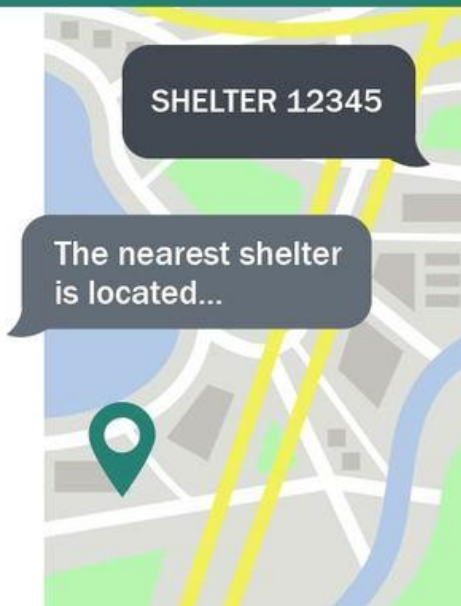
Search for open shelters and open disaster recovery centers near you:

Text **SHELTER** and a zip code to **43362**.

FIND AN EMERGENCY SHELTER NEAR YOU:

**TEXT SHELTER
AND YOUR
ZIP CODE
TO 43362**

STANDARD MESSAGE & DATA RATES APPLY



Additional Information & Resources:

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- [Responding to Children's Emotional Needs During Times of Crisis \(/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Responding-to-Childrens-Emotional-Needs-During-Times-of-Crisis.aspx\)](#)
- [Talking to Children about Disasters \(/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Pages/Talking-to-Children-about-Disasters.aspx\)](#)
- [How Children of Different Ages Respond to Disasters \(/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/How-Children-of-Different-Ages-Respond-to-Disasters.aspx\)](#)
- [Taking Care of Yourself during Disasters: Info for Parents \(/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Taking-Care-of-Yourself-during-Disasters-Info-for-Parents.aspx\)](#)
- [Helping Children Adjust to a Move \(/English/family-life/family-dynamics/Pages/Helping-Children-Adjust-to-a-Move.aspx\)](#)
- [National Mental Health Association \(http://www.nmha.org/finding-help\)](http://www.nmha.org/finding-help)
- **Crisis Helpline** – Dial 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255) to be connected to a network of local crisis centers across the country.

Last Updated 10/29/2018

Source Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

The information contained on this Web site should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

Cómo pueden las familias sobrellevar el estrés de una reubicación después de una catástrofe

Las evacuaciones (desplazamientos) no planificadas durante una catástrofe pueden causar mucho estrés en una comunidad y en las personas que la integran.

Primeros pasos de la recuperación

La recuperación después de una catástrofe ocurre en etapas, en el transcurso de días, semanas y meses. Poco después de que una catástrofe las desarraigue, las familias pueden comenzar el proceso de recuperación. En este momento hay tres pasos generales para fortalecer la salud mental y emocional de la familia.



Los siguientes pasos ayudarán a todos a empezar a retomar el control de sus vidas:

- **Paso 1: Recupere la fuerza y la salud física.** Una vez que todos estén en un lugar seguro y protegido, ya sea un refugio, un apartamento nuevo o la casa de parientes o amigos, asegúrese de ocuparse de las necesidades médicas inmediatas, si las hubiera. Asegúrese de que todos tengan suficiente para comer y beber para recuperar la fuerza física. Asegúrese de que todos puedan dormir bien en un espacio lo más privado posible. La restitución de la fuerza física es un buen primer paso para calmar el desgaste emocional.
- **Paso 2: Restitución de las actividades diarias.** La restitución de las rutinas diarias ayuda a generar un sentido de estar en casa, tanto mental como emocionalmente, incluso cuando no haya un hogar físico. Las rutinas sencillas que suelen hacer juntos, como caminatas familiares, mirar televisión y contar cuentos antes de la hora de dormir, ayudan a volver a unir las piezas de la vida cotidiana, aunque estén en un lugar nuevo. Esa restitución de las actividades diarias reconstruye la normalidad de las mañanas, tardes y noches. Aunque estén lejos de casa y en un lugar extraño, intenten retomar las rutinas diarias lo más posible.
- **Paso 3: Brinde comodidad.** Los miembros de la familia pueden manejar mejor el estrés de una reubicación cuando se sienten cómodos e informados. La comodidad se puede mejorar de las siguientes maneras:
 - Brindando a la familia información sobre otros miembros de la familia, los amigos y noticias de su lugar de origen.
 - Expresar afecto por los miembros de la familia en las maneras que la familia suele demostrar su afecto.
 - Conversar, cuando estén listos, sobre las emociones asociadas con la catástrofe y la reubicación, como los sentimientos de pérdida, de echar de menos el hogar y la preocupación por familiares, amigos y mascotas.

Reconstrucción de la vida familiar

Una vez que haya pasado la emergencia inicial y hayan pasado el shock y la confusión causados por la reubicación por la catástrofe, comienza la etapa de reconstrucción física y recuperación emocional a largo plazo.

Esta fase de recuperación más larga tiene dos pasos:

- **Evaluación de todas las pérdidas físicas y emocionales que experimentó su familia.** Este inventario puede ayudar a identificar medidas prácticas a tomar respecto a la reconstrucción de las pérdidas físicas que sufrió la familia.

- **Crear un entendimiento emocional de la experiencia de catástrofe y la situación de reubicación para ayudar a reconstruir la vida familiar.** Trabajar las emociones y resolverlas es un largo proceso. No hay marcos de tiempo ni etapas.

Resolver las emociones es un proceso de sanación natural que se basa en hablar con amigos sobre los sentimientos, clasificar mentalmente las emociones y recibir ayuda práctica y emocional de la familia, los amigos, el lugar donde practica su fe u otros grupos de apoyo organizado de la comunidad.

Acerca del estrés relacionado con la catástrofe en los niños

El estrés relacionado con la catástrofe afecta a los más jóvenes de varias maneras:

- A la mayoría de los niños les resulta difícil entender el daño, las lesiones y las muertes provocadas por un evento inesperado o fuera de control.
- Después de una catástrofe, los niños pierden temporalmente su visión del mundo como un lugar seguro y predecible. Esto también le ocurre a los adultos.
- Los niños expresan sus sentimientos y reacciones de varias maneras, en especial según su edad.

Muchos se sienten confundidos sobre lo ocurrido y lo que sienten. No todos los niños tienen reacciones inmediatas; algunos pueden tener reacciones con retraso que aparecen días, semanas o incluso meses después, y otros tal vez nunca tengan una reacción. Las reacciones de los niños se ven muy afectadas por las reacciones emocionales de sus padres y los demás adultos de su entorno. Además, los niños pueden fácilmente temer que ocurra nuevamente otro evento similar y que ellos o su familia se lastimen o mueran.

Cómo demuestran los niños el estrés relacionado con una catástrofe

Es normal que las personas más jóvenes muestren signos de estrés después de una catástrofe. A menudo, los signos de estrés que demuestran son diferentes según las distintas edades o niveles escolares.

Signos de estrés en preescolares:

- Despertarse confundidos y asustados por pesadillas.
- Mostrarse reacios a irse a dormir o negarse a dormir solos.
- Actuar y demostrar conductas de niños menores a su edad, como lloriquear, chuparse el pulgar, mojar la cama, hablar como bebés o tener miedo a la oscuridad.
- Apegarse a los adultos más de lo normal.
- Quejarse a menudo de estar enfermos, por ejemplo, dolor de barriga.
- No divertirse haciendo las cosas que solían disfrutar.
- Irritabilidad.

Signos de estrés en niños en edad escolar o adolescentes en edad de escuela media:

- Preocupación constante sobre su seguridad y la seguridad de las demás personas de la escuela o la familia.
- Miedos irracionales.
- Alterarse en forma extrema por motivos intrascendentes o inexistentes.
- Pesadillas y problemas para dormir.
- Problemas en la escuela como faltar a clases o conductas indebidas (por ejemplo, pérdida de interés, aislamiento y necesidad excesiva de atención).
- Quejas por dolores de cabeza o de estómago sin causa.
- No divertirse haciendo las cosas que solían disfrutar.
- Conductas negativas, arranques de ira y peleas.

- Emociones bloqueadas/insensibles.
- Sentimiento de culpa o vergüenza por lo que hicieron o lo que no hicieron durante la catástrofe.

Ir arriba

Signos de estrés en adolescentes en edad de escuela secundaria/preparatoria:

- Sentirse avergonzado por lo que sienten respecto a la catástrofe.
- Miedo, impotencia y preocupación por ser catalogado como "anormal" o diferente por los amigos o compañeros de clase (esto podría llevar a un aislamiento social).
- Sentimiento de vergüenza o culpa por la catástrofe.
- Expresión de fantasías (deseos fuertes) de retribución respecto a personas vinculadas con hechos de la catástrofe.
- No divertirse haciendo las cosas que solían disfrutar.
- Dificultad para concentrarse.
- Comportamientos impulsivos.
- Emociones bloqueadas/insensibles.
- Percepción del mundo como un lugar inseguro.

Cuándo podrían necesitar ayuda adicional los niños

Puede que se presenten situaciones en las que los niños necesiten ayuda adicional para manejar las secuelas emocionales de la catástrofe. Tal vez se beneficien al obtener ayuda de un profesional de la salud si el estrés emocional asociado con la catástrofe no mejora en algunas semanas, o cuando:

- Exhiben arranques emocionales constantes y agresivos
- Tienen problemas graves en la escuela (por ejemplo, peleas, faltar a clase, discusiones con los maestros o guerras/batallas de comida).
- Aislamiento completo de familiares y amigos.
- Imposibilidad de sobrellevar (lidar con) los problemas de rutina o las actividades cotidianas.
- Participación en vandalismo o actividades juveniles ilegales.
- Expresión de ideas/pensamientos suicidas

Pedir ayuda no es muestra de debilidad. Las personas tienen límites, y a veces necesitan ayuda cuando las situaciones los sobrepasan. Buscar la ayuda de otras personas puede ofrecer soluciones que tal vez desconozca.

ENCUENTRE SU REFUGIO POR DESASTRE MÁS CERCANO:

Ir arriba

ENVÍE REFUGIO
Y SU CÓDIGO
POSTAL AL
43362
POR TEXTO

APLICAN TARIFAS DE MENSAJE & DATA.



Información adicional:

- Respondiendo a las necesidades emocionales de los niños en momentos de crisis (/Spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/paginas/responding-to-childrens-emotional-needs-during-times-of-crisis.aspx)
- Cómo hablarles a los niños sobre los desastres (/Spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/paginas/talking-to-children-about-disasters.aspx)
- Cómo reaccionan los niños de diferentes edades antes las tragedias (/spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/building-resilience/paginas/how-children-of-different-ages-respond-to-disasters.aspx)
- Cómo cuidar de sí mismo durante los desastres: información para los padres (/spanish/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/building-resilience/paginas/taking-care-of-yourself-during-disasters-info-for-parents.aspx)
- Cómo ayudar a que sus niños se adapten a una mudanza (/spanish/family-life/family-dynamics/paginas/helping-children-adjust-to-a-move.aspx)






Llame a la **línea de ayuda para casos de crisis** al 1-800-273-8255 (oprime el número 2 para español).

Última actualización 10/29/2018

Fuente Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

La información contenida en este sitio web no debe usarse como sustituto al consejo y cuidado médico de su pediatra. Puede haber muchas variaciones en el tratamiento que su pediatra podría recomendar basado en hechos y circunstancias individuales.

Fire Evacuation Safety Plan

		<p>There is smoke in the air and someone says it is time to leave the area.</p>
		<p>I will leave the house with clothes and shoes on. I will wait in front of the house where family or emergency helpers can find me.</p>
		<p>If it is not safe to get things that are important to me now, I will wait to get them later or new things soon.</p>
		<p>I will help by getting in the vehicle so we can find a safe place to wait for the fire and smoke to go away.</p>
		<p>I will try to ask for the things I want and need and wait patiently for them. I will try to stay calm and be happy to be safe away from the fire and smoke.</p>



If you and your family need help after you've evacuated in the Marion, Polk or Yamhill County area: Call/Text 503-559-0424 | Email support@creatingops.org



Helping Children With ASD Adjust To The Major Fires



By Sandy Shaw, PhD
Applied Interventions & Methodologies

Dear Parents:

This is a stressful time for all of us, includes our children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), with the fires raging across Southern California. No matter if children with ASD understand or are aware of what is happening around us, they sense that the adults around them are anxious, fearful and overwhelmed. Additionally, their anxiety increases as their routines, schedules and living situation are disrupted during the fires (e.g., schools are closed, other family members might be staying in your home, and your family might be evacuated from your home). We would like to offer some suggestions for you to help your child to adjust to the changes and the stressors related to the Major Fires.

Tips And Suggestions For All Children With ASD:

1. Establish structured activities throughout the day to keep the children occupied.
1. Establish routines wherever you and the children are. Use picture and written cues to help them comprehend and adjust to the new routines.
2. Provide visual (i.e., written and picture) cues to help the child fully understand the new structure, routine and what is happening around them.
3. Create as much normalcy as you can to help the children feel safe and calm.
4. Decrease task demands. Also, provide them with visual cues with task demands to assist with full comprehension and attention when task demands are given.
5. Make sure you gain their attention before addressing them. Always address and interact with the child in a calm manner.
6. Provide the child with sensory and calming activities (e.g., taking a walk, listening to music, deep pressure, etc.) throughout the day and

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whenever you notice that the child is becoming anxious or overstimulated.

7. Provide the child with a safe and calm area to go to when he/she becomes anxious or overstimulated.
8. Use social stories to help them understand their living situation, school situation, and other changes occurring around them.
9. Pair visual cues with information you provide the child regarding the fires and the child's personal situation.
10. Provide increased warnings (paired with visual cues) for transitions and changes. Provide them with as much time to prepare for changes in the environment and transitions as possible, especially with changes in living situation.

Tips For Older And High Functioning Children With ASD:

1. Provide factual information regarding the fires. Adjust the information according to the child's cognitive and developmental level.
2. Reassure them that they will be taken care of and the adults will help keep them safe.
3. Redirect them to ask questions and provide them with factual information regarding the fires and their situation whenever you see the child becoming anxious and acting out inappropriately due to the anxiety.
4. Teach them about fires and how fire fighters fight fires.
5. Tell them what is being done to keep him/her safe from the fires.
6. Provide the children with solutions to topics that cause them anxiety and then role-play the solutions with them to further assist with comprehension and for them to retain the information provided.
7. If the child repetitive asks questions due to heightened anxiety, write down the answers to their questions. Go over the responses with them and allow them to keep the written response. Redirect the child to the written response whenever they repeatedly ask the same questions.
8. Provide them with opportunities to help other people and to become functional in this time of crisis.
9. Constant input and exposure to information about the fires can increase fear and anxiety. Decrease their opportunity of watching and gaining information regarding the fires from the media will help decrease anxiety.

Tips For Parents With Children With ASD:

1. Minimize your own anxiety. Your children are in tuned to your

emotional state. Stay calm whenever you are with your children to also help them remain calm.

2. Be aware of worsening allergies and asthma conditions due to the air condition. Allergies and asthma can contribute to acting out behaviors.
3. You might need to provide explanations to your child and give instructions in simpler terms than what the child typically understands due to heightened anxiety. Just like us, when we are anxious we tend to misunderstand or not hear auditory information.
4. You might need to utilize behavioral strategies that you previously utilized when the child is younger and with less skills due to heightened anxiety. Again, like us, we regress in our behavioral and emotional functioning whenever our anxiety increases significantly.

Watch Out For Signs Of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

1. The PTSD symptoms to watch out for are: (That are different from previous levels of functioning)
2. **Hypervigilance** (i.e., an enhanced state of sensory sensitivity accompanied by an exaggerated intensity of behaviors whose purpose is to detect threats)
3. Flashbacks (i.e., nightmares or thought intrusion about the event)
4. Reliving the traumatic events and actively avoiding similar situations in which the trauma occurred (i.e. in the home, school, etc.)
5. Nightmares and difficulty sleeping
6. Irritability or outbursts of angerIntensified psychological distress and physiological reaction to related cues.

If you see these symptoms in your children, yourself or other family members that are lasting for more than 1 month seek professional assistance to address these issues.

We hope you find these tips helpful. Please let us know how else we can assist you during this time of need.

Social Stories To Help With Understanding Of The Fires

Dear Parents:

Below are two social stories written to help High Functioning Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders to understand what is happening in regards to the fires. The purpose of the social stories is to explain what is occurring around them, to know what they can expect and what to do when they become anxious about the fires.

The first social story is titled: Fire

This is to help children who are able to stay in their homes understand what is happening around them and to help decrease their anxiety about the fires.

The second social story is titled: Fires and Leaving My House

This is to help children and their families who needed to leave their homes and may or may not be able to return understand what is happening around them. It also addresses why they are not in school and whether or not they would be able to return to their homes.

Parents are to modify the social stories according to the child's cognitive ability and developmental level. Additionally, parents should individualize the stories by inserting personal information to further help the child understand and attend to the stories. Inserting pictures and putting the story in a book format could also heighten interest and attention to the stories.

Instructions for Use:

1. Read the story to the child at the beginning of the day.
2. Read the story to the child whenever he/she becomes anxious about the fires.
3. Question the child about the content of the story to increase comprehension.
4. Role-play and review the contents of the story with the child to assist with comprehension.

Fires

There have been fires burning around my house.

A fire can be dangerous when it is not burning in the fireplace or in a camp fire.

My family and I watch the news and see fires burning in and around _____ County/my house.

I see smoke in the air and it can be hard to breathe.

I will not go to school when the fires are burning around _____ County (or "my house) so that I can stay away from the fires and stay safe.

The fire fighters and policemen will let us know when the fires are put out so I can go back to school.

Mommy and Daddy will take care of me and make sure that we are safe from the fire.

We are going to be OK.

When I feel scared or confused, I will ask my parents to tell me what is

happening and to ask my parents for help.

This way, I know what is happening and know that I am safe from the fires.

The End

Fires And Leaving My House

There have been fires burning around my house.

A fire can be dangerous when it is not burning in the fireplace or in a camp fire.

My family and I watch the news and see fires burning in and around
_____ County (or “my house”).

I see smoke in the air and it can be hard to breathe.

To help my family and I stay safe, we had to leave our house for a while.

We are staying at _____ while we wait for the fire
fighters to put out the fires.

We will be safe from the fires while we stay at _____.

I will not be going to school while we stay at _____.

The fire fighters and policemen will let us know when it is safe to go back to our
house and start going back to school.

(For families with houses that were affected by the fire, change the wording to:
“The fire fighters might tell us that our house is not safe to go back to. To help
my family and I stay safe, we will find another house to live in. Mommy and
Daddy will take care of me and make sure that we are safe no matter where we
live.”)

When I feel scared or confused, I will ask Mommy & Daddy to tell me what is
going to happen and to ask them for help.

This way, I know what is happening and also feel safe while waiting to go back
home (For families with houses that were affected by the fire, change the
wording to: “This way, Mommy and Daddy can tell me what is happening and
where we will be living.”).

Mommy and Daddy will make sure that we all stay away from the fires and stay
safe.

We are going to be OK.

The End

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