
Crisis Care – Bless Your Body, Bless Your Brain

The recommendations below will assist you in optimal health and healing. They will minimize the effects of stress and aging. Be patient with yourself. Over time, small changes can produce big results.

Get Moving!

Research shows regular aerobic exercise to be effective in preventing and treating depression and anxiety disorders. It also helps reduce anger and irritability. Those who walk, jog, bike, swim, etc., for at least 20 minutes 3 times a week derive the most benefit. Aerobic exercise also helps with maintaining healthy weight, sleep, alertness and energy. Singing, dancing, tossing a ball back and forth are great ways to get the blood flowing.

Don't wait to start, even if your time is limited. Gaining energy is like earning returns on investments; start with the little you have and watch it grow over time.

Eat and drink!

Eating a well-balanced diet has a great benefit to mental health. The body is designed to function best when its needs are met. Starting with breakfast and ending with supper, it is important to feed your body regularly and maintain a healthy variety and balance to your diet. High protein, low carbohydrate choices tend to be healthy. Your brain needs fats for optimal functioning, but calorie restriction or short-term fasting can turn on fat metabolism.

Avoid "empty calories" or "junk food" – highly processed foods high in sugar, white flour or fats. Excessive caffeine can also be detrimental.

Drink lots of water - your body and brain will perform better.

Take Supplements

Dietary supplements can be very beneficial to mental health. Some examples -

Multi-vitamin – overall health

B-complex – energy, anxiety, and depression (Sublingual is best for B12 absorption)

Fish oil – Omega 3 fatty acids are exceptionally good for brain and heart
(3000mg/day for treating mood disorders)

Chromium Picolinate 400mcg – burns fat and builds muscle, stabilizes blood sugar

Melatonin – sleep

Keep a Journal

Writing down thoughts, feelings, and patterns of behavior adds a proven boost to mental health. A person who journals has an increased awareness of self and he/she may be better able to release regret, frustrations and worries and positively integrate negative experiences. Writing can also help with the process of reconciliation and forgiveness.

It can assist in bringing freedom from destructive patterns of thought and behavior. Journaling brings clarity and perspective and facilitates growth and transformation. Be grateful. Regularly make a gratitude list - your mood will improve.

Exercise Your Faith

Your spirit must be nurtured to have maximum mental and physical health. Individuals with strong faith and spiritual discipline enjoy more contentment and joy. Faith and peace can grow through

participation in spiritual community, by prayer and meditation, by reading inspirational or religious texts and by being in nature.

Get Some Counseling or Life Coaching

Individual and group therapies are effective in decreasing symptoms of depression and anxiety. Find a therapist or life coach who is a good match. Accountability helps keep you on course. Coaching or therapy can assist in optimizing health, productivity and the quality of your relationships. In anything you do, coaching maximizes performance.

Have a Creative Outlet

Discovering what you really enjoy and incorporating it into your daily/weekly routine is of great benefit. Finding a way to express one's self through a creative outlet has been found to enhance life satisfaction and helps minimize symptoms and episodes of mood disorders. Drawing and painting, gardening, writing poetry or prose, playing a musical instrument, cooking and interior decorating are a few examples of creative endeavors. Utilizing your gift will give you a sense of self-worth and satisfaction as you express yourself creatively. Beauty is important.

Help Others

We are relational beings. We are made for love. Often, stress and burnout paralyze and rob us of self worth. We may be tempted to withdraw from relationships just when we need to press in. Don't minimize the impact of small gifts. A gentle touch, a caring word, a smile, a note of thanks or encouragement can produce wonderful effects. You'll feel better when you share the little you have. Have a mentor. Be a mentor.

Know Your Purpose

Having a sense of direction and purpose in life is very important in maintaining a healthy attitude, especially in times of adversity. You can overcome huge obstacles when focused on important goals. Writing your goals helps you achieve them. Remember that we tend to set short-term goals too high and long-term goals too low.

Take Time for Rest and Retreat

A day of rest each week is vital to avoid burnout, and time away can be hugely restorative. Try to get away for personal retreat twice a year for several days to renew and reconnect with your own soul. Knowing yourself is essential for intimacy with others and with God. It is difficult to hear from God if you are not paying attention to your heart.

Recommended Reading

FEELING GOOD- The New Mood Therapy by Dr. David Burns is excellent. It is especially helpful for those dealing with depression or anxiety.

Books such as The Purpose Driven Life and What Color is Your Parachute? can be very useful in clarifying your values, your beliefs and your direction in life.

When you engage life with optimism and courage, it can be a great adventure. And remember, little steps taken consistently over time yield big results. As G.K. Chesterton remarked, "Anything worth doing is worth doing badly." ☺

Begin today. Bless your body! Bless your brain!

Financial Do's and Don'ts After Disaster Strikes

After recent events, we are all aware that disaster can strike any day. And it can impact any of us. To help you best navigate a very difficult time, here are some key Financial Do's and Don'ts to follow if your life is ever upended by a disaster.

Do: Contact your credit card issuers. In the wake of the Texas and Florida devastation, many card companies stepped up and announced they were waiving payment deadlines—and not charging late fees—for a few weeks (or more) for impacted cardholders.

That's helpful. But if you have a FICO credit score of at least 720 or higher, and you have an unpaid balance—or anticipate you will be charging more as you deal with the cleanup or living in a temporary home—you can ask for more help. Request that the interest rate on your card be reduced. The average credit card interest rate right now is 14%. Yet it costs banks and financial institutions less than 1.5% to borrow money. Clearly, there is room for banks to reduce what they charge in a challenging time. If they won't budge, I may tell them you are going to take your business to another card issuer that offers zero percent interest on balance transfers, and better rates on new charges. (Suze Orman's blog post on 10/5/17 explains how.)

Do: Contact Your Mortgage Servicer ASAP. It often captures people by surprise that even when a home is destroyed or uninhabitable, the mortgage payments are still due. That said, many loan servicers are stepping up and suspending payments for a few months for homeowners in impacted areas. A three-month forbearance is common, but lenders have the ability to extend it for longer. But don't just assume you don't have to pay. You need written confirmation.

Don't: Buy a Used Car Anywhere in the Country Without a Careful Check. You should always have an independent mechanic do a thorough inspection before you buy a used car. But this is incredibly important over the next few months as scamsters will buy up damaged cars in the disaster zones, give them a cursory clean up, and then try to sell them off as being totally okay. And the scamsters aren't stupid. They often ship the damaged cars to other parts of the country. If you're buying a used car in Salt Lake City you probably aren't thinking that it was under six feet of water in Houston a few months ago. Paying for a full report of a car's history, from services such as Carfax and AutoCheck will be money well spent. If the used car dealer offers a report, just check the date it was run, and confirm it was after the recent natural disasters.

Do: Be Careful Raiding Your Long-Term Savings. The IRS has made it easier for people in affected areas to take a hardship withdrawal from their 401(k). I will not sit here and insist you don't do this. All I ask is that you very carefully consider the impact. You will owe income tax on the withdrawal. More importantly, you will have used money today to support your tomorrows. If you absolutely feel you have no other options, then maybe that is a hard tradeoff to consider. But I strongly urge everyone to make this the absolute last resort option. Leaving your retirement savings untouched right now will leave you in better financial shape down the line. I know it's hard to think long-term when you have a disaster right in front of you. All I ask is that you take the time to think through the impact of every decision you make today on your future. That's advice that will always serve you well.

Information courtesy of Suze Orman. Check out her website - <http://www.suzeorman.com>

The Stages of Grief

The Kübler-Ross model of grief (the five stages of grief) describes five primary responses to loss. These stages are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Someone who is grieving may go through these stages in any order, and they may return to previous stages.

Denial: "This can't be happening."

Individuals may refuse to accept the fact that a loss has occurred. They may minimize or outright deny the situation. It is suggested that loved ones and professionals be forward and honest about losses to not prolong the denial stage.

Anger: "Why is this happening to me?"

When an individual realizes that a loss has occurred, they may become angry at themselves or others. They may argue that the situation is unfair and try to place blame.

Bargaining: "I will do anything to change this."

In bargaining, the individual may try to change or delay their loss. For example, they may try to convince a partner to return after a breakup, or search for unlikely cures in the case of a terminal illness.

Depression: "What's the point of going on after this loss?"

At the stage of depression the individual has come to recognize that a loss has occurred or will occur. The individual may isolate themselves and spend time crying and grieving. Depression is a precursor to acceptance because the individual has come to recognize their loss.

Acceptance: "It's going to be okay."

Finally, the individual will come to accept their loss. They understand the situation logically, and they have come to terms emotionally with the situation.



Post-Trauma/Disaster Stress

Post-trauma/disaster stress can occur when people have been exposed to a traumatic event.

A trauma event can be *human-made*, such as a car accident, school shooting, street violence, family violence, etc. There are also *natural* trauma events, such as tornados, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, fires, etc. Trauma events may impact people directly or indirectly. Indirect exposure may include seeing the disaster on television or hearing stories about others' experiences, possibly including risk of physical harm or death. Regardless of how individuals experienced the trauma/disaster, it is during this time that people might experience intense fear, helplessness, and hopelessness that exceed normal coping skills.

After a traumatic event, some people may want to avoid remembering or feeling things that remind them of the traumatic experience, such as wanting to talk about the experience or going to the place of the event.

Other things that people might experience after a traumatic event include:

- Sleeping difficulties
- Flashbacks
- Intense memories
- Feeling sad and depressed
- Feeling angry
- Feeling helpless
- Physical problems such as headaches, stomach aches, and dizziness
- Difficulty with being close to others
- Feeling numb
- Feeling that life is very short and wanting to do things put off in the past, such as getting married, traveling, going back to school, etc.
- Wanting to be close to family and friends
- Overeating or undereating
- Memory and concentration problems which can make an "A student" suddenly becoming a "D student" (This is only temporary, and normal.)
- Finding that old beliefs and values about oneself, others, and the world have been impacted

These are just some of the things people might experience. If you or a loved one experiences such things for more than one month, you might want to consider contacting a professional for assistance. Other things that should be attended to by seeking professional help include:

- Feeling suicidal or attempting suicide
- Self-harm such as cutting, substance abuse, etc.
- Wanting to hurt others

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Crisis Care – A Guide for Parents

Helping Kids Cope and Grow through Trauma

Support Strategy Tips

(How to start a conversation with your child after a traumatic experience)

- Remind your child they are safe now
- Be patient and answer their questions, even if they become repetitive
- Answer their questions honestly and try to keep the answers simple and realistic, clarify misconceptions
- If they can't seem to settle down or sit still, do a simple breathing exercise to calm their bodies:
 - "Let's practice a different way of breathing that can help calm our bodies down"
 - Put one hand on your stomach like this (Demonstrate)
 - Okay, we are going to breathe in through our noses. When we breathe in, we are going to fill up with a lot of air and our stomachs are going to stick out like this (demonstrate)
 - Then we will breathe out through our mouths. When we breathe out, our stomachs are going to suck in and up like this (demonstrate)
 - We are going to breathe in really slowly while I count to three. I'm also going to count to three while we breathe out really slowly.
 - Let's try it together. Great job!
- Remind your child they are not responsible for what has happened
- Pay attention. Look at your child and avoid distractions or interruptions when you are talking to them.
- Show your child that you are listening by nodding, smiling (if appropriate), and using facial expressions.
- Repeat what they said in your own words to ensure that you have understood them correctly.
- Remind your child that a disaster is rare
- Build on your child's strengths. Find ways to help your child use what he or she had learned in the past to help your child deal with disaster.

Communication Tips

(How to talk to your child after a traumatic experience and what to do if they don't want to)

Some questions to ask:

- What does your child think happened and is now happening?
- What does your child understand about the help disaster responders give to people during and after an event?
- What is your child most upset about?

- What is your child most confused about?

How to Respond:

- From what you're saying, I can see how you would be...
- It sounds like you're saying...
- Am I right when I say that you...
- It sounds really hard.
- We can talk more later if you'd like

If your child won't talk about it...

- Provide opportunities for your child to draw, talk, and play, but don't force it.
- Try talking to your child through a puppet or toy, it's non-threatening or ask them to draw or make something

Example: Kid's Drawing Activity:

Art expression prompts two important components in trauma recovery — the expression of feelings and encouragement of a trauma narrative or story to emerge.

Ask your child to draw pictures about:

- *What happened.*
- *Their biggest worry.*

After your child has completed it is important to sit down with your child and ask him or her to explain the drawing. You will most likely be surprised at how much you will learn about what is really on your child's mind. End this activity on a positive note. Let your child know that you love him or her no matter what. **DO NOT** be judgemental about what your child has drawn, but if you are concerned about what your child has drawn, see the When to Worry Checklist for who to contact.

Some of the comments you can make in response to your child's drawing and trauma story are:

- *This is interesting.*
- *I didn't know you thought about these things.*
- *It's normal to have these feelings and thoughts after what happened to you.*
- *I'm glad you can tell me about this.*
- *You can tell me anything.*
- *That's really scary (sad). I get scared (sad), sometimes too. It's okay to be scared (sad).*
- *You must have been mad. I get mad too. It's okay to be mad sometimes.*
- *This makes me feel better too. I have some of the same reactions/feelings.*
- *I love you and will do everything I can to keep you safe.*

Coping Skills Tips

(In trying to get back to a routine/sense of normalcy, your child might need some additional help)

- Restore daily activities as soon as possible to rebuild a normal sense of morning, afternoon, evening, and night
- Talking to a family member/friend
- Prayer
- Listening to and/or making music
- Journaling/drawing
- Acknowledge that something bad happened and that its ok to be sad
- Exercise
- Maintaining a balanced diet
- Getting enough sleep/rest
- More physical contact, hugging, cuddling
- Give your child choices, often traumatic events involve loss of control so you can them feel safe by giving them some choices when appropriate (what to eat, wear, etc.)
- If possible, let your child help others, contribute in some way
- Minimize media exposure and unnecessary reminders of what happened
- Set small goals for your child, praise him or her even for small achievements
- Encourage after-school activities for your child
- Encourage community by letting your child see/connect with family and friends.
- Try not to introduce drastic changes or stricter standards of behavior
- Try not to leave your children alone with people that they don't know well

When to Worry

The list below indicates signs that a child may be in extreme distress, and a referral to specialized services may be needed:

- If the child is at risk of harm to himself/herself and/or others
- If a child expresses suicidal thoughts
- If the child shows extreme, persistent withdrawal i.e. no emotional response, and the child's expression seems flat with no negative or positive expressions.
- If the child is persistently whining/whimpering/uncontrolled crying over time (different from a grieving, liberating sob).
- If the child is dissociating i.e. if the child is detached from surroundings and fails to engage emotionally like the child used to do.
- If the child is experiencing hallucinations i.e. the child is hearing voices that are not real (auditory hallucinations) or seeing things/people that are not real (visual hallucinations) in ways that do not seem playful or joking.
- If the child is experiencing persistent anxiety attacks
- If the child is showing signs of mental disability such as permanent difficulties understanding language and social interaction

Common Trauma Reactions in Children and How to Respond

Trauma Reaction	What's Happening	How to Respond
Sleep Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't want to be alone ● Want to be with other people ● Quiet time gives them time to think about the scariness of the disaster ● Kids may have bad dreams 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If appropriate and possible, let your child sleep with/near you but let them know that this is temporary ● Have a bedtime routine so they know what to expect ● Remind your child that they are safe and that dreams are not real
Fear/ Separation Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Kids show fear and uncertainty by crying and clinging. ● Child may experience physical reactions like stomach issues and elevated heart rate ● Kids don't want to be away from you, even for a short period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear is normal, reassure them that the event is over, everything is ok ● Don't let them see your fear, keep them away from inappropriate adult conversations ● Give them a safe place to communicate fear, respond with reassurance
Loss and Grief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grieving for a particular item, i.e. a specific toy can also a child's way of grieving for all they had before the disaster 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● If possible, find an acceptable replacement for you child's toy or lost item ● Distract your child with other activities
Eating Problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stress can cause changes in a child's appetite ● The food your child eats can have a profound impact on his/her mood and ability to cope with stress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focusing too much on eating can cause more stress ● Don't force your child to eat ● Model healthy eating habits for your child ● Try to make mealtimes fun and relaxing
Regression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Often when children are scared or stressed, they lose abilities/skills they previously learned ● Regression can cause shame and embarrassment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be understanding and supportive, they are not doing this on purpose ● Don't draw attention to or make a big deal of regressive behavior
Behavior Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It may seem strange but when children feel unsafe, they often behave in unsafe ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Calmly stop or interrupt the unsafe behavior and hold you child if necessary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Violent play can be a way of telling us how crazy things are and how they feel inside ● Controlling behavior helps them deal with fears/lack of control ● Lack of vocabulary can contribute to acting out frustrations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tell your child that their behavior is unsafe, that they are important/loved and that you don't want anything bad to happen to them ● Try to be more tolerable than usual and respond with love rather than harsh discipline
Hyperactivity/ Lack of Concentration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fear can create nervous energy that stays in our bodies ● Young children run/jump/fidget just like adults pace when nervous 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Help your child to recognize their feelings and reassure them that they are safe ● Give them an appropriate outlet for their nervous energy such as running, sports, breathing exercises
Excessive Crying	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● It is often difficult for children to say how they feel so they cry to express their overwhelming emotions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't expect your child to be brave or tough ● Create a safe place for them to be scared, angry, or sad ● Try to help your child recognize and name their emotions and understand why they feel that way
Withdrawal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● While some children act out when they are stressed, others shut down ● Withdrawal can include not talking, having difficulty expressing emotion, display a lack of interest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't force them to talk but let them know you are available when they are ready ● Keep them close ● Try to help them name their feelings and let them know it's ok to feel sad, mad, or worried ● Try different activities they might like to see what they respond to

These materials were created by **Lana and Lauren Coetzee** referencing the following resources:

- Save the Children: Psychological First Aid
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- Starr Commonwealth: Telling the Trauma Story through Drawing



Kids and Hurricanes

How to Cope when Something Horrible has Happened

Have you recently been affected by a hurricane? If so, there are normal reactions to something abnormal.

Here are some of them:

- Feeling shocked, angry, or scared about the safety of people you love
- Feeling scared that it will happen again
- Feeling headaches, or stomach aches, or even aches in arms and legs
- Feeling like you don't want to do school work anymore or can't pay attention
- Feeling like you have a lot of energy and want to move around fast
- Feeling tired or wanting to move slowly
- Having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at night. Sometimes having nightmares.
- Seeing images of the event in your mind or imagining the event at times when you don't want to. Sometimes seeing other violent images in your head.
- Feeling like you want to do things that you know you shouldn't do or things that might be risky
- Feeling sad and not wanting to be around others
- Feeling like you need to be very close to people you love and need to be touching them
- Feeling lots of feelings that don't fit together, like wanting to laugh and cry at the same time

What you can do:

- Talk to an adult you trust about how you are feeling
- Ask questions to an adult about what happened so that you can get all the answers you need. Even if those questions are something you worry might make the adult sad or cry, it is important to ask your questions
- It's good to limit how much TV and internet news you watch and try to watch with an adult you trust so you can ask questions.
- Do your best to eat well, drink lots of water, and try to get enough sleep
- Remember that adults are feeling a lot of the same feelings you are and you can work together to take good care of yourselves
- Draw pictures or write about the event
- Create a picture or doodle that you can draw whenever you are feeling lots of feelings and need a way to get those feelings out.
- Create a symbol with your hands or a secret hand-shake that you have with someone you trust so that they know what you are thinking about if you don't want to say any words.
- Ask an adult if there are other kids who you can play with who have experienced the same thing. Sometimes, just playing with other kids who understand can help a lot.
- You might like to find a way to help others or your community.
- Try to do some normal activities that you enjoy. It's ok to have fun.

Parent Tips for Helping Adolescents after Disasters



Reactions	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<u>Detachment, shame, and guilt</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide a safe time to discuss with your teen the events and their feelings. ▪ Emphasize that these feelings are common, and correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Many teens—and adults—feel like you do, angry and blaming themselves that they could have done more. You’re not at fault. Remember even the firefighters said there was nothing more we could have done.”
<u>Self-consciousness:</u> About their fears, sense of vulnerability, fear of being labeled abnormal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help teens understand that these feelings are common. ▪ Encourage relationships with family and peers for needed support during the recovery period. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I was feeling the same thing. Scared and helpless. Most people feel like this when a disaster happens, even if they look calm on the outside.” ▪ “My cell phone is working again, why don’t you see if you can get a hold of Pete to see how he’s doing.” ▪ “And thanks for playing the game with your little sister. She’s much better now.”
<u>Acting out behavior:</u> Using alcohol or drugs, sexually acting out, accident-prone behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help teens understand that acting out behavior is a dangerous way to express strong feelings (like anger) over what happened. ▪ Limit access to alcohol and drugs. ▪ Talk about the danger of high-risk sexual activity. ▪ On a time-limited basis, keep a closer watch on where they are going and what they are planning to do, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Many teens—and some adults—feel out of control and angry after a disaster like this. They think drinking or taking drugs will help somehow. It’s very normal to feel that way—but it’s not a good idea to act on it.” ▪ “It’s important during these times that I know where you are and how to contact you.” Assure them that this extra checking-in is temporary, just until things have stabilized.
<u>Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help to identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and to clarify the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it. ▪ Explain to teens that media coverage of the disaster can trigger fears of it happening again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “When you’re reminded, you might try saying to yourself, ‘I am upset now because I am being reminded, but it is different now because there is no hurricane and I am safe.’” ▪ Suggest, “Watching the news reports could make it worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?”

Parent Tips for Helping Adolescents after Disasters



Reactions	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p><u>Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships:</u> Teens may pull away from parents, family, and even from peers; they may respond strongly to parent's reactions in the crisis.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain that the strain on relationships is expectable. Emphasize that everyone needs family and friends for support during the recovery period. ▪ Encourage tolerance for different family members' courses of recovery. ▪ Accept responsibility for your own feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Spend more time talking as a family about how everyone is doing. Say, "You know, the fact that we're crabby with each other is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling things amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other." ▪ You might say, "I appreciate your being calm when your brother was screaming last night. I know he woke you up, too." ▪ "I want to apologize for being irritable with you yesterday. I am going to work harder to stay calm myself."
<p><u>Radical changes in attitude</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain that changes in people's attitudes after a disaster are common, but often return back over time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "We are all under great stress. When people's lives are disrupted this way, we all feel more scared, angry—even full of revenge. It might not seem like it, but we all will feel better when we get back to a more structured routine."
<p><u>Premature entrance into adulthood:</u> (wanting to leave school, get married).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage postponing major life decisions. Find other ways to make the teens feel more in control. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "I know you're thinking about quitting school and getting a job to help out. But it's important not to make big decisions right now. A crisis time is not a great time to make major changes."
<p><u>Concern for other survivors and families</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not let them burden themselves with undue responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help teens to identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful (clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need).

Parent Tips for Helping School-Age Children after Disasters



Reactions	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<u>Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide a safe place for her to express her fears, anger, sadness, etc. Allow children to cry or be sad; don't expect them to be brave or tough. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "When scary things happen, people have strong feelings, like being mad at everyone or being very sad. Would you like to sit here with a blanket until you're feeling better?"
<u>Sleep problems:</u> Bad dreams, fear of sleeping alone, demanding to sleep with parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let your child tell you about the bad dream. Explain that bad dreams are normal and they will go away. Do not ask the child to go into too many details of the bad dream. Temporary sleeping arrangements are okay; make a plan with your child to return to normal sleeping habits. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "That was a scary dream. Let's think about some good things you can dream about and I'll rub your back until you fall asleep." "You can stay in our bedroom for the next couple of nights. After that we will spend more time with you in your bed before you go to sleep. If you get scared again, we can talk about it."
<u>Concerns</u> about the safety of themselves and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help them to share their worries and give them realistic information. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a "worry box" where children can write out their worries and place them in the box. Set a time to look these over, problem-solve, and come up with answers to the worries.
<u>Altered behavior:</u> Unusually aggressive or restless behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the child to engage in recreational activities and exercise as an outlet for feelings and frustration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "I know you didn't mean to slam that door. It must be hard to feel so angry." "How about if we take a walk? Sometimes getting our bodies moving helps with strong feelings."
<u>Somatic complaints:</u> Headaches, stomachaches, muscle aches for which there seem to be no reason.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Find out if there is a medical reason. If not, provide comfort and assurance that this is normal. Be matter-of-fact with your child; giving these complaints too much attention may increase them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure the child gets enough sleep, eats well, drinks plenty of water, and gets enough exercise. "How about sitting over there? When you feel better, let me know and we can play cards."
<u>Closely watching a parent's responses and recovery:</u> Not wanting to disturb a parent with their own worries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give children opportunities to talk about their feelings, as well as your own. Remain as calm as you can, so as not to increase your child's worries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Yes, my ankle is broken, but it feels better since the paramedics wrapped it, I bet it was scary seeing me hurt, wasn't it?"
<u>Concern</u> for other survivors and families.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not burden them with undue responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Help children identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful (clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need).

Parent Tips for Helping School-Age Children after Disasters



Reactions	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p><u>Confusion about what happened</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give clear explanations of what happened whenever your child asks. Avoid details that would scare your child. Correct any misinformation that your child has about whether there is a present danger. ▪ Remind children that there are people working to keep families safe and that your family can get more help if needed. ▪ Let your children know what they can expect to happen next. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “I know other kids said that more tornadoes are coming, but we are now in a safe place.” ▪ Continue to answer questions your children have (without getting irritable) and to reassure them the family is safe. ▪ Tell them what’s happening, especially about issues regarding school and where they will be living.
<p><u>Feelings of being responsible:</u> School-age children may have concerns that they were somehow at fault, or should have been able to change what happened. They may hesitate to voice their concerns in front of others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide opportunities for children to voice their concerns to you. ▪ Offer reassurance and tell them why it was not their fault. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take your child aside. Explain that, “After a disaster like this, lots of kids—and parents too—keep thinking, ‘What could I have done differently?’ or ‘I should have been able to do something.’ That doesn’t mean they were at fault.” ▪ “Remember? The firefighter said no one could save Pepper and it wasn’t your fault.”
<p><u>Fears of recurrence of the event and reactions to reminders</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and clarify the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it. ▪ Reassure them, as often as they need, that they are safe. ▪ Protect children from seeing media coverage of the event, as it can trigger fears of the disaster happening again. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When they recognize that they are being reminded, say, “Try to think to yourself, I am upset because I am being reminded of the hurricane because it is raining, but now there is no hurricane and I am safe.” ▪ “I think we need to take a break from the TV right now.” ▪ Try to sit with your child while watching TV. Ask your child to describe what they saw on the news. Clarify any misunderstandings.
<p><u>Retelling the event or playing out the event over and over</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Permit the child to talk and act out these reactions. Let him know that this is normal. ▪ Encourage positive problem-solving in play or drawing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “You’re drawing a lot of pictures of what happened. Did you know that many children do that?” ▪ “It might help to draw about how you would like your school to be rebuilt to make it safer.”

Parent Tips for Helping Preschool-Age Children after Disasters

Reactions/Behavior	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p><u>Helplessness and passivity:</u> Young children know they can't protect themselves. In a disaster, they feel even more helpless. They want to know their parents will keep them safe. They might express this by being unusually quiet or agitated.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide comfort, rest, food, water, and opportunities for play and drawing. ▪ Provide ways to turn spontaneous drawing or playing about traumatic events to something that would make them feel safer or better. ▪ Reassure your child that you and other grownups will protect them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give your child more hugs, hand holding, or time in your lap. ▪ Make sure there is a special safe area for your child to play with proper supervision. ▪ In play, a four year old keeps having the blocks knocked down by hurricane winds. Asked, "Can you make it safe from the winds?" the child quickly builds a double block thick wall and says, "Winds won't get us now." A parent might respond with, "That wall sure is strong," and explain, "We're doing a lot of things to keep us safe."
<p><u>General fearfulness:</u> Young children may become more afraid of being alone, being in the bathroom, going to sleep, or otherwise separated from parents. Children want to believe that their parents can protect them in all situations and that other grownups, such as teachers or police officers, are there to help them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be as calm as you can with your child. Try not to voice your own fears in front of your child. ▪ Help children regain confidence that you aren't leaving them and that you can protect them. ▪ Remind them that there are people working to keep families safe, and that your family can get more help if you need to. ▪ If you leave, reassure your children you will be back. Tell them a realistic time in words they understand, and be back on time. ▪ Give your child ways to communicate their fears to you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Be aware when you are on the phone or talking to others, that your child does not overhear you expressing fear. ▪ Say things such as, "We are safe from the earthquake now, and people are working hard to make sure we are okay." ▪ Say, "If you start feeling more scared, come and take my hand. Then I'll know you need to tell me something."
<p><u>Confusion about the danger being over:</u> Young children can overhear things from adults and older children, or see things on TV, or just imagine that it is happening all over again. They believe the danger is closer to home, even if it happened further away.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give simple, repeated explanations as needed, even every day. Make sure they understand the words you are using. ▪ Find out what other words or explanations they have heard and clarify inaccuracies. ▪ If you are at some distance from the danger, it is important to tell your child that the danger is not near you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to explain to your child that the disaster has passed and that you are away from the danger ▪ Draw, or show on a map, how far away you are from the disaster area, and that where you are is safe. "See? The disaster was way over there, and we're way over here in this safe place."
<p><u>Returning to earlier behaviors:</u> Thumb sucking, bed-wetting, baby-talk, needing to be in your lap.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remain neutral or matter-of-fact, as best you can, as these earlier behaviors may continue a while after the disaster. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ If your child starts bedwetting, change her clothes and linens without comment. Don't let anyone criticize or shame the child.

Parent Tips for Helping Preschool-Age Children after Disasters

Reactions/Behavior	Responses	Examples of things to do and say
<p>Fears the disaster will return: When having reminders—seeing, hearing, or otherwise sensing something that reminds them of the disaster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Explain the difference between the event and reminders of the event. ▪ Protect children from things that will remind them as best you can. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ “Even though it’s raining, that doesn’t mean the hurricane is happening again. A rainstorm is smaller and can’t wreck stuff like a hurricane can.” ▪ Keep your child from television, radio, and computer stories of the disaster that can trigger fears of it happening again.
<p>Not talking: Being silent or having difficulty saying what is bothering them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Put common feelings into words, such as anger, sadness, and worry about the safety of parents, friends, and siblings. ▪ Do not force them to talk, but let them know they can talk to you any time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Draw simple “happy faces” for different feelings on paper plates. Tell a brief story about each one, such as, “Remember when the water came into the house and you had a worried face like this?” ▪ Say something like, “Children can feel really sad when their home is damaged.” ▪ Provide art or play materials to help them express themselves. Then use feeling words to check out how they felt. “This is a really scary picture. Were you scared when you saw the water?”
<p>Sleep problems: Fear of being alone at night, sleeping alone, waking up afraid, having bad dreams.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reassure your child that he is safe. Spend extra quiet time together at bedtime. ▪ Let the child sleep with a dim light on or sleep with you for a limited time. ▪ Some might need an explanation of the difference between dreams and real life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide calming activities before bedtime. Tell a favorite story with a comforting theme. ▪ At bedtime say, “You can sleep with us tonight, but tomorrow you’ll sleep in your own bed.” ▪ “Bad dreams come from our thoughts inside about being scared, not from real things happening.”
<p>Not understanding about death: Preschool age children don’t understand that death is not reversible. They have “magical thinking” and might believe their thoughts caused the death. The loss of a pet may be very hard on a child.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Give an age-appropriate consistent explanation—that does not give false hopes—about the reality of death. ▪ Don’t minimize feelings over a loss of a pet or a special toy. ▪ Take cues from what your child seems to want to know. Answer simply and ask if he has any more questions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow children to participate in cultural and religious grieving rituals. ▪ Help them find their own way to say goodbye by drawing a happy memory or lighting a candle or saying a prayer for the deceased. ▪ “No, Pepper won’t be back, but we can think about him and talk about him and remember what a silly doggy he was.” ▪ “The firefighter said no one could save Pepper and it wasn’t your fault. I know you miss him very much.”

Parent Tips for Helping Infants and Toddlers after Disasters

If Your Child	Understand	Ways to Help
<p>... is now very demanding and controlling.</p> <p>... seems "stubborn" insisting that things be done her way.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Between the age of 18 months to 3 years, young children often seem "controlling." ▪ It can be annoying, but it is a normal part of growing up and helps them learn that they are important and can make things happen. ▪ When children feel unsafe, they may become more controlling than usual. This is one way of dealing with fears. They are saying, "Things are so crazy I need control over something." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remember your child is not controlling or bad. This is normal, but may be worse right now because she feels unsafe. ▪ Let your child have control over small things. Give her choices over what she wears or eats, games you play, stories you read. If she has control over small things, it can make her feel better. Balance giving her choices and control with giving her structure and routines. She will feel unsafe if she "runs the show." ▪ Cheer her on as she tries new things. She can also feel more in control when she can put her shoes on, put a puzzle together, pour juice.
<p>... tantrums and is cranky.</p> <p>... yells a lot – more than usual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Even before the disaster, your child may have had tantrums. They are a normal part of being little. It's frustrating when you can't do things and when you don't have the words to say what you want or need. ▪ Now, your child has a lot to be upset about (just like you) and may really need to cry and yell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Let him know you understand how hard this is for him. "Thing are really bad right now. It's been so scary. We don't have your toys or TV, and you're mad." ▪ Tolerate tantrums more than you usually would, and respond with love rather than discipline. You might not normally do this, but things are not normal. If he cries or yells, stay with him and let him know you are there for him. Reasonable limits should be set if tantrums become frequent or are extreme.
<p>... hits you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For children, hitting is a way of expressing anger. ▪ When children can hit adults they feel unsafe. It's scary to be able to hit someone who's supposed to protect you. ▪ Hitting can also come from seeing other people hit each other. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Each time your child hits, let her know that this is not okay. Hold her hands, so she can't hit, have her sit down. Say something like, "It's not okay to hit, it's not safe. When you hit, you are going to need to sit down." ▪ If she is old enough, give her the words to use or tell her what she needs to do. Tell her, "Use your words. Say, I want that toy." ▪ Help her express anger in other ways (play, talk, draw). ▪ If you are having conflict with other adults, try to work it out in private, away from where your child can see or hear you. If needed, talk with a friend or professional about your feelings.
<p>... says "Go away, I hate you!"</p> <p>... says "This is all your fault."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The real problem is the disaster and everything that followed, but your child is too little to fully understand that. ▪ When things go wrong, young children often get mad at their parents because they believe they should have stopped it from happening. ▪ You are not to blame, but now is not the time to defend yourself. Your child needs you. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Remember what your child has been through. He doesn't mean everything he is saying; he's angry and dealing with so many difficult feelings. ▪ Support your child's feeling of anger, but gently redirect the anger towards the disaster. "You are really mad. Lots of bad things have happened. I'm mad too. I really wish it didn't happen, but even mommies can't make hurricanes not happen. It's so hard for both of us."

Parent Tips for Helping Infants and Toddlers after Disasters



If Your Child	Understand	Ways to Help
<p>... doesn't want to play or do anything.</p> <p>... seems to not really have any feelings (happy or sad).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your child needs you. So much has happened and he may be feeling sad and overwhelmed. ▪ When children are stressed, some yell and others shut down. Both need their loved ones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sit by your child and keep him close. Let him know you care. ▪ If you can, give words to his feelings. Let him know it's okay to feel sad, mad, or worried. "It seems like you don't want to do anything. I wonder if you are sad. It's okay to be sad. I will stay with you." ▪ Try to do things with your child, anything he might like (read a book, sing, play together).
<p>... cries a lot.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Your family may have experienced difficult changes because of the disaster, and it is natural that your child is sad. ▪ When you let your child feel sad and provide her with comfort, you help your child even if she remains sad. ▪ If you have strong feelings of sadness, it may be good for you to get support. Your child's well-being is connected to your well-being. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow your child to express feelings of sadness. ▪ Help your child name her feelings and understand why she may feel that way. "I think you're sad. A lot of hard things have happened" ▪ Support your child by sitting with her and giving her extra attention. Spend special time together. ▪ Help your child feel hopeful about the future. Together think and talk about how your lives will continue and the good things you will do, like go for a walk, go to the park or zoo, play with friends. ▪ Take care of yourself.
<p>... misses people you are no longer able to see after the disaster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Even though young children do not always express how they feel, be aware that it is difficult for them when they lose contact with important people. ▪ If someone close to your child died, your child may show stronger reactions to the disaster. ▪ Young children do not understand death, and may think that the person can come back. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For those that have moved away, help your child stay in touch in some way (for example, sending pictures or cards, calling). ▪ Help your child talk about these important people. Even when we are apart from people, we can still have positive feelings about them by remembering and talking about them. ▪ Acknowledge how hard it is to not be able to see people we care for. It is sad. ▪ Where someone has died, answer your child's questions simply and honestly. When strong reactions last longer than two weeks, seek help from a professional.
<p>... misses things you have lost because of the disaster.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ When a disaster brings so much loss to a family and community, it is easy to lose sight of how much the loss of a toy or other important item (blanket) can mean to a child. ▪ Grieving for a toy is also your child's way of grieving for all you had before the disaster. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow your child to express feelings of sadness. It is sad that your child lost her toy or blanket. ▪ If possible, try to find something that would replace the toy or blanket that would be acceptable and satisfying to your child. ▪ Distract your child with other activities.



Kids and Hurricanes

How to Cope when Something Horrible has Happened

Have you recently been affected by a hurricane? If so, there are normal reactions to something abnormal.

Here are some of them:

- Feeling shocked, angry, or scared about the safety of people you love
- Feeling scared that it will happen again
- Feeling headaches, or stomach aches, or even aches in arms and legs
- Feeling like you don't want to do school work anymore or can't pay attention
- Feeling like you have a lot of energy and want to move around fast
- Feeling tired or wanting to move slowly
- Having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep at night. Sometimes having nightmares.
- Seeing images of the event in your mind or imagining the event at times when you don't want to. Sometimes seeing other violent images in your head.
- Feeling like you want to do things that you know you shouldn't do or things that might be risky
- Feeling sad and not wanting to be around others
- Feeling like you need to be very close to people you love and need to be touching them
- Feeling lots of feelings that don't fit together, like wanting to laugh and cry at the same time

What you can do:

- Talk to an adult you trust about how you are feeling
- Ask questions to an adult about what happened so that you can get all the answers you need. Even if those questions are something you worry might make the adult sad or cry, it is important to ask your questions
- It's good to limit how much TV and internet news you watch and try to watch with an adult you trust so you can ask questions.
- Do your best to eat well, drink lots of water, and try to get enough sleep
- Remember that adults are feeling a lot of the same feelings you are and you can work together to take good care of yourselves
- Draw pictures or write about the event
- Create a picture or doodle that you can draw whenever you are feeling lots of feelings and need a way to get those feelings out.
- Create a symbol with your hands or a secret hand-shake that you have with someone you trust so that they know what you are thinking about if you don't want to say any words.
- Ask an adult if there are other kids who you can play with who have experienced the same thing. Sometimes, just playing with other kids who understand can help a lot.
- You might like to find a way to help others or your community.
- Try to do some normal activities that you enjoy. It's ok to have fun.