

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTERS

Parents and caregivers may be concerned about how disasters can affect the emotional well-being of their children. Save the Children has prepared the following 10 tips to support children through any disaster based on its nearly 100 years of emergency expertise.

10 Tips from Save the Children

Save the Children recommends parents, teachers, grandparents and caregivers:



1. Limit media time.

Watching too many media reports of the disaster can frighten or overwhelm children and even adults. So, limit children's media exposure of the disaster.



2. Listen to your children carefully.

Children can experience stress when they do not understand dangerous experiences. Find out what children know about the disaster and then talk with them to help them understand the situation and ease concerns.



3. Give children reassurance.

Tell children that adults are working to protect and help children affected by the disaster. Also, let them know that if an emergency happens, your main concern would be their safety.



4. Be alert for significant changes in behavior.

Pay attention to changes in children's sleeping patterns, eating habits, and concentration levels. Also watch for wide emotional swings or frequent physical complaints. If any of these actions do happen, they will likely lessen within a short time. If they continue, however, seek professional help and counseling for the child.



5. Understand children's unique needs.

Not every child will experience a disaster in the same way. As children develop, their intellectual, physical and emotional abilities change. Remember that children of any age can be affected by a disaster and offer them encouragement and support.



6. Give your children extra time and attention.

Children need close, personal attention to know they are safe. Talk, play and, most importantly, listen to them.



7. Be a model for your children.

Your children will learn how to deal with these events by seeing how you respond. The amount you tell children about how you're feeling should depend on the age and maturity of the child.



8. Watch your own behavior.

Make a point of being sensitive to those impacted by the disaster. This is an opportunity to teach your children that we all need to help each other.



9. Help your children return to a normal routine.

Children benefit from routine activities such as set eating times, bed time, and playing with others. Parents should make sure their children's school or child care is also return to normal schedules.



10. Encourage your children to do volunteer work.

Helping others can give children a sense of control and security and promote helping behavior.



Save the Children urges adults to seek out and follow the guidance of Emergency Management and Public Health Officials to help ensure the safety of their children.