

# Helping Children Cope During and After a Disaster

Impacts from a disaster extend beyond what you can see—they can create a great amount of stress and anxiety for children. They may not fully understand what is going on, so it's important to help them cope with any stress they may have.

## Practicing Positive Parenting

- Set a good example by managing your own stress through healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating healthy, getting enough sleep, and avoiding drugs and alcohol.
- Practice disciplining your children in a calm, thoughtful way.
- Give yourself time to cool off rather than punishing in anger.
- Show your children ways that conflicts can be resolved with words, rather than hitting or hurting.
- Talk with your children and listen carefully to what they say about their experiences.
- Be alert to changes in their behavior or emotions and talk calmly with them if you are concerned.

The following tips can help reduce stress before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.

### BEFORE

- Assure your child that you are prepared to keep them safe.
- Review safety plans before a disaster or emergency happens. Having a plan will increase your child's confidence and help give them a sense of control.

### DURING

- Stay calm and reassure your child.
- Talk to your child about what is happening in a way that they can understand. Keep it simple and appropriate for your child's age.

### AFTER

- Give your child opportunities to talk about what they went through. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
- Encourage your child to take action directly related to the disaster so they feel a sense of control. Volunteering to help community or family members in a safe environment is a good way of getting them involved. Children should NOT participate in disaster cleanup activities for health and safety reasons.
- Because parents, teachers, and other adults see children in different situations, it is important for them to work together to share information about how each child is coping.
- Help your children to have a sense of structure, which can make them feel more at ease. Once schools and child care facilities resume, help them return to their regular activities.

## It's OK to Ask for Help

### Call 2-1-1

If you need assistance locating long-term mental health resources, talking through a problem, or exploring mental health treatment options, call 211 to speak with a live person who can help.

211 is available 24 hours a day to listen and provide emotional support, crisis counseling, suicide prevention, and information and referrals. Conversations are confidential.

### Text the word 'Home' to 741-741

Crisis Text Line provides free, 24/7 mental health support via text message.

