

# HELPING CHILDREN AFTER A NATURAL DISASTER: TIPS FOR PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

Natural disasters can be especially traumatic for children and youth. This resource lists the issues associated with specific disasters, provides information for both families and schools immediately following a natural disaster, and shares suggestions to help children adjust to relocation.

## EMPHASIZE RESILIENCY

### Competencies

Help children identify coping skills they have used in the past when scared or upset.

### Strategies

Encourage prosocial behaviors, helping seeking, and good physical health.

### Awareness

Highlight communities that have recovered from natural disasters and how they did so.



## REMAIN CALM AND REASSURING

- Children, especially young ones, take cues from adults.
- Acknowledge loss or destruction, but emphasize efforts to clean up and rebuild.
- Assure children that family and friends will take care of them and that over time things will get better.



## ACKNOWLEDGE AND NORMALIZE FEELINGS

- Allow children to discuss feelings and concerns, but don't force them to talk about the disaster.
- Listen, empathize, and let them know most initial reactions are normal.
- Obtain assistance for feelings and concerns that may suggest that the child (or anyone else) is in harm's way.



## STRENGTHEN PEER SUPPORT

- Children with strong emotional supports are better able to cope with adversity.
- Peer relationships can decrease isolation and supplement support from caregivers



## TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN NEEDS

- Take time to address your own reactions as fully as possible.
- Talk to other adults, take care of your physical and mental health, and avoid using drugs or alcohol to feel better.



## SEEK HELP FOR PROLONGED SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- With the help of naturally occurring social support systems, most children will be fine. However, some may have reactions requiring professional help.
- Get professional support for children whose reactions continue or worsen after a week or more.
- Communities that experience repeated disasters or crises may be at risk for compound or cumulative trauma.
- Your child's school can be a great source of support.



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For additional guidance, visit  
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-climate-safety-and-crisis/natural-disaster-resources>

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