



Tips and Lessons – Disaster Response

Tips for Parents in Helping Children and Youth Cope

These are tips for talking with young people in your family about disasters and in helping children to find resilience in overcoming stressful events in their communities and in the world. Although in the short term, children may show signs of stress, young people often are able to find resilience in responding to disaster situations.

TIPS FOR TALKING TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH:

Be Honest

- Do not sugar-coat a situation or tell a child “everything will be fine” unless you can realistically say this. Give your child age-appropriate information about what has happened without overdramatizing the situation.

Reassurance is Key!

- Tell your child that you will do everything you can to keep him or her safe, and that your family will stick together, no matter what.

Practice Patience

- Children who have experienced disaster-related stress often regress in their development. Small children may even regress in their potty training. Outbursts or tantrums may occur. These are normal reactions. Be understanding and stay calm.

Social Interaction with Friends

- Encourage teens and older children to check in with their friends. Social interaction with friends will help teens find comfort and stay connected with their peer group.

Listen

- Spend time listening to your child. Hold and hug your child. Tell your child how much you love him or her and that you will get through this situation together. Perform small acts of kindness and generosity.

Dear Lord, be with us this day as we gather together to comfort and support each other. Help us to find your guiding words and presence in those around us. Help us find listening ears and kind words as we seek to bring our thoughts and prayers to You.

In Christ's Name, Amen.

Prayer of St. Augustine

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who work, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.

Tend the sick, Lord Christ; give rest to the weary, bless the dying, soothe the suffering, pity the afflicted, shield the joyous; and all for your love's sake.

Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, Page 134



Encourage Expression

- Drawing a picture, telling a story, or acting out a drama may assist your child in emotionally coping with the disaster. Don't be judgmental of these expressions. Try to respond by asking the child to tell you about the picture or other artistic expression, and listen attentively. Encourage teens to write in journals, draw, or play music to express their emotions.

Turn Off the News

- Turn off the television news to prevent overload of disturbing images. Also, monitor your child's conversations with other children and be prepared to gently correct misinformation.

Take Care of Yourself

- You likely will need time to process and cope with the disaster yourself. If you can safely do so, allow another adult to care for your child while you give yourself time to seek support from others or just to attend to clean-up or paperwork resulting from the disaster. Consider swapping out babysitting duties with friends or neighbors.

Follow "Normal" Routines

- Try to follow "normal" routines and daily schedules as much as you are able to give your child a sense of familiarity and security.

Pray

- Pray with your children. Pray for your children. Practice your faith and model resilience in the face of hardship.

For more information on helping flood survivors, please see the following online resources:

["The Sunday After a Disaster"](#)

To learn more about what Episcopal Relief & Development is doing following Hurricane Harvey and information about ways that you can help, see our Hurricane Harvey page:

www.episcopalrelief.org/harvey

Dear Lord, be with us today and always. Give us strength to face all challenges with love and with courage. Be with us as we heal in a hurting world.

In Christ's name, Amen.