

Parents and caregivers

Taking care of yourself will help you take care of your child.

Tips

Look after yourself. Get enough sleep, eat well, drink water, be active, and take some time for yourself.

Ask for help. It's okay to ask for help when you need it. Get the support you need from family, friends, cultural or faith groups, and healthcare providers.

Name your feelings. Ask yourself if your thoughts, feelings, actions, or reactions are different than normal and try to understand why. This can help you understand and cope with your child's behaviours and feelings.

Model good coping skills. Your child sees your emotions through your words, facial expressions, and actions. If you have strong emotions, it's okay. Name them (e.g., "I feel angry. I feel frustrated. I feel sad."). Talk about how you feel and how you're going to cope so that your child can learn how to do the same.

Talk to a health or social care provider or call Health Link at 811 if you're not sure how to support your child or if you're concerned about how they're coping.

811 Health Link
Health Advice 24/7

1-877-303-2642

Mental Health Help Line
Mental Health Support 24/7

1-800-668-6868

Kids Help Phone
www.KidsHelpPhone.ca

> To order this resource go to:
<https://dol.datacm.com/>
Login ID: mentalhealthresources
Password: mh2016
Item Number: DR009

Your opinion matters.
To tell us what you think of this resource go to:
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Helping Your Child or Teen Recover from a Disaster or Emergency



After a disaster or emergency.

Like an adult, your child can have a delayed reaction to what they've been through. Changes in behaviour can be part of how a child copes with stressful events. With care, attention, and understanding from parents and caregivers, symptoms of stress often go away on their own over time.

Common Stress Reactions

Children up to 11 years may:

- have changes in eating habits (e.g., refusing to eat, picky)
- have changes in sleeping habits (e.g., scared to sleep alone, trouble falling or staying asleep)
- whine or cry more than usual
- be afraid to left alone (e.g., always want to be with parent or caregiver)
- develop new fears (e.g., strangers, animals, monsters, sound that remind them of the event)
- go back to behaviours they did when younger (e.g., thumb sucking, bed-wetting, daytime potty-training accident, temper tantrums)
- withdraw or become quieter than usual
- have problems concentrating or following instructions
- act out or fight more with friends or siblings
- have problems at school or not want to go to school
- talk about the event often or repeat the same scenes of the event when playing

Tips

- Provide reassurance and extra comfort (e.g., "I'm here.", "I love you.", extra hugs or cuddles).
- Allow them to talk about the event and answer questions in a way your child can understand. Be patient and kind when explaining the same thing or talking about the same thing several times.
- Try to return to your regular routines as much as you can (e.g., meal and bedtime routines). Regular routines can provide comfort and can help your child feel safe and secure.
- Be patient with changes in their behaviour (e.g., bed-wetting, crying)
- Make short-term changes to sleeping routines (e.g., night light, keeping their door open, extra bedtime stories, staying with them until they fall asleep)
- Encourage playtime and physical activity. Set-up playdates with friends and family
- Make a plan and practice safety procedures for future disasters with your child.

Teens 12 to 18 years may:

- have changes in eating habits (e.g., too much or too little)
- have changes in sleeping habits (e.g., too much or too little)
- act out or have aggressive behaviours
- have trouble with school
- have physical problems (e.g., headaches, general aches and pains, bowel problems)
- have changes in mood and energy
- lose interest in social activities, withdraw from friends or family
- be easily influenced (e.g., give into group or peer pressure)

Tips

- Spend extra time together (e.g., play games, go for a walk).
- Lighten your expectations at school and at home.
- Allow your teen to help with recovery activities in the community (e.g., cleanup work, rebuilding activities). This will help create connections and provide them with a sense of purpose.
- Encourage them to connect with their friends and family, either in-person or through technology (e.g., phone, text, video chat). Having a strong social support network with healthy social connections with help them cope and recover.
- When your teen is ready, talk about the things that you learned from the disaster or emergency and how to prepare for any future events. Planning for future disasters is a key part of recovery.

