



Helping Your Teen

- Get back to normal routines as much as possible.
- Encourage, but don't force your teen to talk about the event.
- Talk about the disaster and plan what to do in future disasters.
- Let your teen know it's okay to talk about feelings.
- Listen to your teen's feelings or concerns without judgement.
- Lighten your expectations at school and at home.
- Encourage your teen to take part in community rehabilitation work (e.g., cleanup work, rebuilding activities) as much as he or she can.
- Encourage your teen to be involved in regular social activities or clubs.



Helping Children and Teens Recover from a Disaster or Emergency

Health Link
811

Mental Health Help Line
1-877-303-2642
Open 24 hours a day,
7 days a week

Kids Help Phone
1-800-668-6868
www.KidsHelpPhone.ca
Open 24 hours a day,
7 days a week

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If your child's response to a disaster or emergency is affecting their home and school life, you may need to ask for support from a trusted friend or family member or a mental health professional.

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Children and teens don't react the same way as adults after a disaster or emergency.

During a disaster or emergency, a child's environment and routine may change. Your child may feel and act differently because they might not understand what has happened. Changes in behavior can be part of how a child copes.

To help your child stay calm, reassure your child that they're safe, that you'll protect them from danger, and that you'll help if your child is scared.

Teens may need more attention after a disaster. A teen needs to feel that their fears are appropriate and are the same fears that other people have.

Common Stress Reactions

Under 5 Years Old:

- more afraid to be left alone
- changes in appetite
- whining or clinging
- needs more soothing or sucking
- startles easier
- new fears

6 to 12 Years Old:

- gets quieter and withdraws more
- goes back to behaviours they did when younger
- has problems concentrating or following instructions
- more acting out behaviours
- has problems at school
- fighting more with siblings
- repeats same scenes of stressful event when playing

Teens:

- trouble sleeping
- eat too much or not enough
- acts out or rebels more
- problems at school
- physical problems (e.g., headaches, aches and pains, bowel problems)
- gets depressed or loses interest in social activities
- gets quieter and withdraws
- higher or lower energy level
- gives in to group or peer pressure

How You Can Help

Like an adult, your child or teen can have a delayed reaction to what they've been through. Your child can lose trust and may be afraid that the event will happen again.

After a disaster or emergency, help your child or teen to cope by reducing tension, anxiety, and feelings of guilt. Give your child or teen some responsibilities (e.g., caring for pets, helping someone). A meaningful task gives your child something else to focus on. Encourage good nutrition and sleep habits. These actions can decrease worry and help them to recover.

Helping Your Younger Child

- Let your child talk about the event from their point of view. Let your child know you'll listen to their concerns and questions.
- Explain that their feelings are normal and it's okay to feel angry or sad. Help your child talk about and cope with their feelings.
- Limit your child's exposure to media and adult conversations about the disaster or emergency.
- Try to keep to your family's routines. Make time for family time and play time together.
- Give your child a chance to play with other children, be with other children their age, and be active.
- It's important to comfort and hold your child to help them feel safe and secure. Offer reassurance, especially at bedtime.

