

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events>

How to support our children through a natural disaster:

Do:

- Ensure children and adolescents are safe and that their basic needs are addressed.
- Allow them to be sad or cry.
- Let them talk, write, or draw pictures about the event and their feelings.
- Limit their exposure to repetitive news reports about traumatic events.
- Let them sleep in your room (for a short time) or sleep with a light on if they are having trouble sleeping.
- Try to stick to routines, such as reading bedtime stories, eating dinner together, and playing games.
- Help them feel in control by letting them make some decisions for themselves, such as choosing their meals or picking out their clothes.
- Pay attention to sudden changes in behaviors, speech, language use, or strong emotions.
- Contact a health care provider if new problems develop, particularly if any of the following symptoms occur for more than a few weeks:
 - Having flashbacks (reliving the event)
 - Having a racing heart and sweating
 - Being easily startled
 - Being emotionally numb
 - Being very sad or depressed

Don't:

- Expect children and adolescents to be brave or tough.
- Make them discuss the event before they are ready.
- Get angry if they show strong emotions.
- Get upset if they begin bed-wetting, acting out, or thumb-sucking.
- Make promises you can't keep (such as "You will be OK tomorrow" or "You will go home soon.")

Where can I find help?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a Disaster Distress Helpline, which provides immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. The helpline is free, multilingual, confidential, and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can call or text the helpline at 800-985-5990 or visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline website](#).

SAMHSA provides the [Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#), an online resource for locating mental health treatment facilities and programs in your state. For additional resources, visit [NIMH's Help for Mental Illnesses webpage](#).

If you, your child, or someone you know is in immediate distress or is thinking about hurting themselves, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** toll-free at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You also can text the **Crisis Text Line** (HELLO to 741741) or use the Lifeline Chat on the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline website](#).