

Safe & Sound: Parent/Caregiver Tips

Disasters and other stressful events can be particularly difficult for young children who may not fully understand what's going on around them. To help your child feel safe, cope with the situation, and be hopeful about the future, try these tips:

Comfort Your Child

Keep reassuring your child that you love him and will keep him safe. Try to calm your own fears first, since your child takes cues from you. Listen carefully to your child and answer his questions honestly and simply.

Spend Time Together

Know that simply smiling, laughing, and playing together can also help your child feel safe.

Keep a Normal Routine

As much as possible, try to keep a daily routine, such as reading the same bedtime story or singing the same lullaby each night.

Monitor the Media

Don't allow your child to watch repeated images of the disaster, its damage, and other violent events on the TV or on your phone. He may think that it's still happening, in real time. If you think your child might have seen or heard something, ask him about it. Correct inaccurate information and let him express his thoughts and emotions.

Be Aware of Your Child's Behavior

Your child might have nightmares, wet the bed, be aggressive or inattentive, or cling to you. These are common reactions after a disaster. If they continue for several weeks seek the help of a health-care provider, teacher, school counselor, or mental-health professional.

Take Care of Yourself

You're more helpful to your child when you've taken care of your own physical and emotional needs. Build a support system of relatives, friends, faith leaders, or counselors. Although it may be difficult, try to do something daily that helps you feel a little better, such as breathing deeply or taking a walk.

