



Save the Children®

HOW TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH DISASTERS

Many parents, teachers, grandparents and caregivers are concerned about how dramatic images of disasters can affect the emotional well-being of their children and are looking for advice. Save the Children has prepared the following 10 tips to support children through any disaster. These tips are based on Save the Children's years of national and international experience in supporting children in disasters.

10 Tips from Save the Children

Save the Children recommends parents, teachers, grandparents and caregivers:

- 1. Limit media time.** While it can be important for adults to stay informed about the disaster, images and reports may be confusing and frightening for children. Watching too many media reports of the disaster can overwhelm children and even adults. So, limit the number of television reports about the disaster you and your children watch.
- 2. Listen to your children carefully.** Try to find out what your children know and understand about the disaster before responding to their questions. Children can experience stress when they do not understand dangerous experiences. Find out what your child knows about the disaster. Then, talk to your child to help him or her understand the situation and ease their concerns.
- 3. Give children reassurance.** Tell children that adults are doing everything they can to protect and help children who have been affected by the disaster. Also, let them know that if an emergency happens, your main concern would be their safety. Make sure they know they are being protected.
- 4. Be alert for significant changes in behavior.** Caregivers should be alert to any significant changes in children's sleeping patterns, eating habits, and concentration levels. Also watch for wide emotional swings or frequent physical actions, complaints. If any of these actions do happen, they will likely lessen within a short time. If they continue, however, you should seek professional help and counseling for the child.



Save the Children urges adults to seek out and follow the guidance of Emergency Management and Public Health Officials to help ensure the safety of their children.

- 5. Understand children's unique needs. Not every child will experience a disaster in the same way. As children develop, their intellectual, physical and emotional abilities change. Younger children will depend largely on their parents to interpret events; older children and adolescents will get information from various sources, such as friends and the media. Remember that children of any age can be affected by a disaster. Provide them all with love, understanding and support.**
- 6. Give your children extra time and attention. Children need close, personal attention to know they are safe. Talk, play and, most importantly, listen to them. Find time to engage in special activities with children of all ages.**
- 7. Be a model for your children. Your children will learn how to deal with these events by seeing how you respond. The amount you tell children about how you're feeling should depend on the age and maturity of the child. You may be able to disclose more to older or more mature children but remember to do so calmly.**
- 8. Watch your own behavior. Make a point of being sensitive to those impacted by the disaster. This is an opportunity to teach your children that we all need to help each other.**
- 9. Help your children return to a normal routine. Children usually benefit from routine activities such as set eating times, bedtime, and playing with others. Parents should make sure their children's school is also returning to normal patterns and not spending a lot of time discussing the disaster.**
- 10. Encourage your children to do volunteer work. Helping others can give children a sense of control and security and promote helping behavior. During a disaster, children and adolescents can bring about positive change by supporting those in need.**



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TIPS FOR TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT EMERGENCIES

Emergencies are scary—for children and for adults. But talking about disasters before they happen and teaching kids basic preparedness skills can empower them to feel secure in times of crisis because they know what to do and understand that adults who care for them are working to keep them safe. Here are some tips for talking to children about disasters:

Explain Why. From the start, let children know what you will be doing and why. For example: “Today, we are learning what to do to be ready for emergencies so when emergencies happen, we know what to do to stay safe.” Repeat this to help stay positive and on topic.



Be Honest. Give children information that is clear, accurate and age appropriate. Don’t lie. The truth is that disasters are dangerous and people could die, but don’t let this be the focus. Remember, you’re there to help them stay safe. Don’t give in-depth details or graphic examples that will confuse or disturb children. Find out what children know and understand about different disasters before responding to questions. This will help alleviate their distress and clear up confusion.

Listen. One of the best ways to understand what children already know and need to know about disasters is listening to them. Listen carefully to their discussions and answers. Let them express their feelings in a safe atmosphere.

Be Reassuring. Children can experience stress when they do not understand what they perceive to be a dangerous situation. Let them know that disasters are scary and it’s okay to be scared when thinking about disasters. But let them know that you’re talking about disasters so that they can know what to do. Let them know that during an emergency, many caring adults including parents, teachers and other caregivers will be working to keep them safe.

Limit Graphic Images. Although it’s okay to show examples of different types of disasters, avoid using graphic images or videos that show destruction. For younger kids, use animated images that

may be less scary. During or following a disaster in the area, limit children's exposure to news media that may scare children or confuse them as it can appear like the disaster is happening over and over again.

Focus on the Learning. Kids are curious and love learning new things through play, activities and reading. Rather than focusing on disasters' destructive nature, focus on teaching kids what disasters are from an educational, exploratory perspective.

Recognize Helpers. When disasters strike, let them know that there are many helpers on the scene —people like first responders, police and emergency medical services personnel who will be working to keep them safe. Use this as a lesson in compassion and teach kids the importance in helping others who may be facing a crisis.

Know Your Audience. If the community recently experienced a disaster, or if there was a major crisis in the news, be sensitive to kids' emotional needs.

It's Okay to Say "I Don't Know." Children and parents may ask questions to which you may not know the answers. It's okay to say that you don't know and then offer to find an answer for them or refer them to additional resources (e.g., local first responders or emergency management). There are also a lot of great resources and tools available from Save the Children, the American Red Cross, FEMA and others on their websites.

DISASTER CHECKLIST

FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES



Get Ready. Get Safe.

Do you have a plan in place to help ensure your children are safe and secure if a disaster strikes? If the worst happens, your children will look to you to know how to react and respond. Use this checklist to help prepare and keep your children safe in a disaster.

MAKE A FAMILY PLAN

Before a disaster strikes, make sure you and your family all know these details to help stay safe.

YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SHOULD DETERMINE:

- Which facilities will be used as shelters in your community in case of emergency
- A designated meet-up location if your family is separated
- A family contact outside of your area who would not be affected by a local disaster

TEACH YOUR KIDS

Your children may need to act in an emergency.

MAKE SURE THEY KNOW THE FOLLOWING:

- Basic personal information to identify themselves if separated from you
- Home phone number
- How to dial 911
- Family's meet-up locations
- How to reach the family's out-of-town contact

HAVE A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Communication systems are often unreliable during emergencies. Be sure to have a back-up plan.

- All family cell phones should have "ECC" (Emergency Contact Card) or ICE (In Case of Emergency) programmed into their phone's contact list with all family phone numbers plus out-of-area contacts.
- Remind family members that text messages often get through in an emergency, even when a phone can't.

CREATE A GO KIT

Prepare a backpack or portable bag for each family member with essential hygiene items and contact information in case you need to leave home.

BE SURE TO INCLUDE:

- Each child's contact and medical information
- Recent photos of each child
- Comfort food and treats
- Activity items like books, puzzles and games
- Comfort items like a stuffed animal or blanket

STOCK UP AT HOME

In addition to basic survival items like water, flashlights, a battery-powered radio and extra batteries, have these kid-friendly supplies on hand.

NON-PERISHABLE FOOD

- Nursing supplies
- Formula
- Pre-packaged baby food
- Ready-to-eat canned foods and opener
- Juice pouches
- Non-perishable pasteurized milk
- Dry cereals, protein bars, fruit snacks
- Nuts and nut butters
- Vitamins

MEDICAL SUPPLIES

- Fever reducer
- Antibacterial ointment
- Rash ointment
- Each child's medications

PERSONAL HYGIENE ITEMS

- Baby wipes
- Diapers
- Nursing pads
- Feminine products

CHECK WITH YOUR CHILD CARE FACILITY

Since your children may be at a child care facility when disaster hits, make sure all care givers have each child's most recent contact info.

Remember to ask the staff about their emergency plans. If they do not have a plan, you may want to ask them to create one.

*For more information and support, visit:
www.savethechildren.org/getready*

Family Disaster Plan



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Our Family Members:

Name:	Age:	Phone Number:	Medical Needs:
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Our Address:

Home:	School:	Work:
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Where do we get information about if our schools or work have to evacuate? _____

Our Home:

1. What are the evacuation routes from our home?

2. What is the safe place in our home if we need to “shelter in place” during an emergency?

3. If we need to evacuate our home for an emergency that only affects our house (small fire, gas leak), where is our family meeting place near our house?

4. If we need to evacuate our house and neighborhood for a bigger emergency or if we’re not together when a disaster happens, where is our meeting place in walking distance?

5. If we are evacuating out of town for a big emergency, where will we go?

6. What additional things should we plan for in our house, like pets or family members with special needs?

Family Disaster Plan



Our Friends:

Emergency Contact Information (2 in town, 1 out of town)

	Name:	Phone Number:	Address:
Contact 1:	_____	_____	_____
Contact 2:	_____	_____	_____
Contact 3:	_____	_____	_____

Our Community Helpers:

Important Numbers and Alert Systems in the Community:

Alerts and Notifications:

Doctor: _____

Pediatrician: _____

Dentist: _____

Urgent Care: _____

Hospital: _____

Vet: _____

Electric Company: _____

Gas Company: _____

Water Company: _____

Medical Insurance: _____

Policy #: _____

Medical Insurance: _____

Policy #: _____

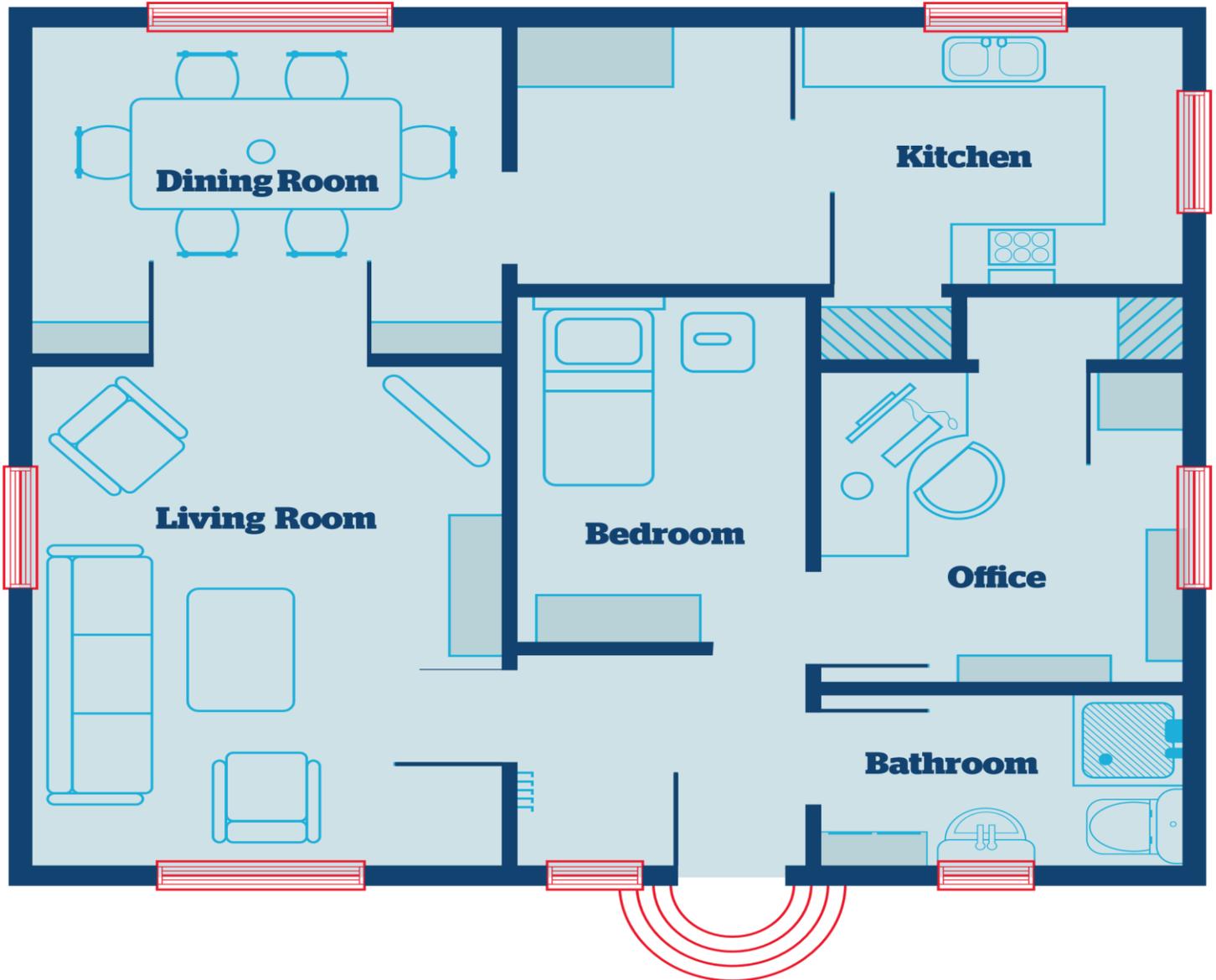
Our Supplies

1. Do you have your Emergency Go Bag? YES / NO
2. Do you have your Shelter in Place Supplies? YES / NO

Our Practice

1. When will we practice our evacuation routes and meet-up locations? _____
2. How often will we test each other on remembering our phone numbers? _____
3. What day each year do we plan to update this? _____

HOME MAP WORKSHEET



DRAW AN EVACUATION PLAN.

Draw arrows to show two exit routes from the bedroom.

Draw arrows to show two exit routes from the kitchen and living room.

Draw arrows to show the best evacuation route from the office if there is a fire by the front door.

Mark safe rooms inside for sheltering-in-place with circles.

Use a “K” to mark where a Disaster Supplies Kit could be stored and easily found by the family.

My ECC

(Emergency Contact Card)

Cut and paste a recent photo here.

DIRECTIONS: Please fill out the following information with your parent or guardian. Place this card in your book bag or wallet to keep with you at all times.

MY INFORMATION

First and Last Names: _____

Nickname: _____

Birthday: _____ / _____ / _____

Home Address: _____

Home Phone: (_____) _____

FOLD HERE

MY OUT-OF-TOWN CONTACT'S INFORMATION (in case local contacts cannot be reached)

First and Last Names: _____

Home/Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Relation to me (friend/uncle): _____

MY DOCTOR'S INFORMATION

First and Last Names: _____

Work Phone: (_____) _____

Cell Phone : (_____) _____

MY PARENT/GUARDIAN'S INFORMATION

First and Last Names: _____

Work Address: _____

Work Phone: (_____) _____

Home/Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

MY LOCAL CONTACT'S INFORMATION (in case a parent/guardian cannot be reached)

First and Last Names: _____

Home/Cell Phone: (_____) _____

Email: _____

Relation to me (friend/uncle): _____

FOLD HERE

MEDICAL OR SPECIAL CARE INFORMATION

I have the following medical conditions and/or allergies:

I take the following prescription medications:

I need the following medical treatment or care:

