

Tools to Help Children in Times of Crisis or Disaster

Disasters can leave children in a variety of emotional states. A child's response to disaster may include feeling frightened, confused, and insecure. Whether a child has experienced trauma firsthand, has watched the event on television, or has overheard it addressed by adults, it is important to be informed and ready to help if reactions occur.

Here are a few tips adapted from [The Emergency Response Handbook for Children's Ministry](#) to help parents in our church and community.

€Share important information. Children will wonder what happened and why. The more children know the less scared and confused they will be. Answer questions honestly and openly. Remember to share age-appropriate details. If you don't know an answer, it's OK to say so.

€Pray. Praying with children will show not only that you care, but that God cares, too. Invite children to pray silently or share their concerns aloud. Give children the opportunity to lead the prayers as well.

€Let the children see your feelings. Children often don't know what to do and how to respond. They look to the adults in their lives to give them clues. Be honest with the children about your feelings. Keep in mind that it is healthy to show emotions and be careful to shield children from hysterics.

€Give information about the future. Children will probably be fearful that such an event can happen again. Talk to the children about the methods in place to protect them should a similar event happen. Highlight specific plans that show how the community has responded.

€Keep listening. Giving children a chance to express their feelings will help them process what happened. For some children, it may take more time to openly discuss their feelings. Other children may want to address the issue immediately. Be prepared to listen

carefully to children at different times and in multiple conversations.

€Allow children to help. Give children the opportunity to help others heal from a disaster. Provide children with practical ways to help others recover through hands-on mission projects, prayer, care cards, etc.