

# After The Earth Shakes

A GUIDE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH  
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF AN EARTHQUAKE

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This material was created for children and families affected by the devastating earthquakes in Japan, Haiti and New Zealand by Dr. Annette La Greca ([www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca](http://www.psy.miami.edu/faculty/alagreca)) and Scott Sevin and Elaine Sevin of 7-Dippity, Inc., who donated their time and services. For information about 7-Dippity, please go to [www.7-dippity.com](http://www.7-dippity.com).

This book is dedicated to the volunteer mental health professionals who assist children, families and first responders impacted by disaster. Thank you for your hard work and selfless devotion to saving lives

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# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Dear Parent or Caring Adult,



Although an earthquake may last only minutes, its effects can last for years. In the aftermath of an earthquake, many parents and caregivers express concerns about how the earthquake and related events might affect their children. Common questions are: “What should I tell my child?” “How can I tell if these events are bothering my child?” “What can I do to help my child cope with this disaster?” This book is designed to help parents address these questions.

Children and adults’ reactions to an earthquake will vary depending in part on how much they were directly affected by the quake. Because of this, some parents and children may be more interested in the materials in this book than others. We suggest you:

- **Read the book first** before choosing which topics and activities to do with a child.
- **Evaluate your own stress level** before beginning work on this book. If you feel you are having difficulty with stress, talk to another adult before working on this book.
- **Take care of yourself.** In order to support and help your child, please take care of yourself. Use some of the tips in this book to help yourself (e.g., limit your media exposure, stay healthy, establish a routine, do something fun, etc.). All parents need a break from dealing with the many stressors that accompany a natural disaster, such as an earthquake.

This book contains activities that parents and caring adults can do together with children. The activities are appropriate for children ages 6 to 12 years, but may be adapted for older or younger children as well. We encourage you to adjust the activities and their pace to the child you are working with. Younger children (ages 6 to 8) may need extra help from an adult, and may prefer to complete some activities by drawing rather than by writing. Younger or active children may also prefer working on one topic at a time; others may be able to complete two or more topics in one sitting.

There are 15 Topics covered in this book. For each topic, there is an “Adult Page” on the left and a “Child Page” on the right. Some of the Adult pages have “Joint Activities” for adults and children to complete together.

- Each Adult Page has instructions and activities for adults - 
- Each Child Page contains parallel information and activities for children - 

There are five sections in this book. The first section, Topics 1-3, contains activities that may help you “ease into” the book. The second section, Topics 4-6, will help you understand a child’s reactions to an earthquake. The third section, Topics 7-10, covers coping skills that should be helpful for most children. The fourth section, Topics 11-15, focuses on coping skills to help children with specific situations. The fifth section contains information on safety (Topic 16) as well as answers to some common questions and additional useful information. Even though the topics have been put together in a suggested sequence, feel free to “skip ahead” to those that may be especially useful for your child.

Find a quiet time and place to complete the activities. Explain to your child that the activities in this book are informative and fun and will help them cope with any bad feelings that they are having as a result of the earthquake.

With our best wishes,            Annette La Greca    Elaine Sevin    Scott Sevin

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## What Is An Earthquake?

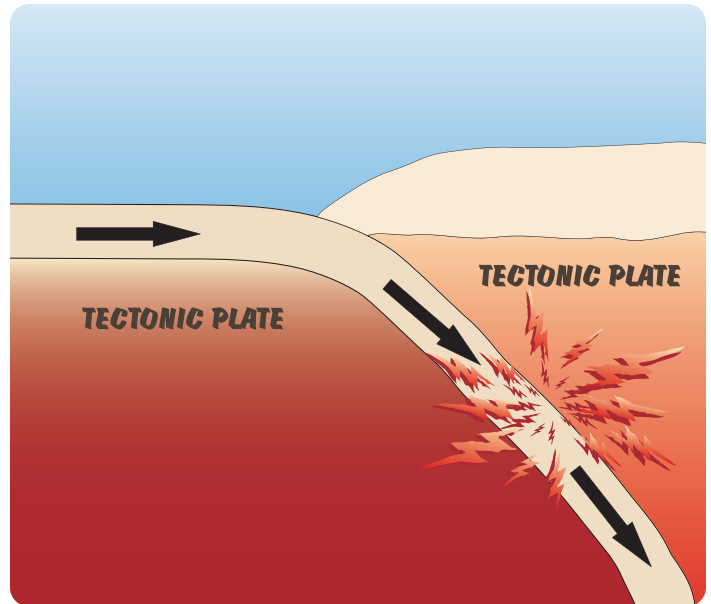
Living through an earthquake can be a very scary event for children and adults. After an earthquake, it is important that both physical and psychological needs are attended to. If children have not previously experienced an earthquake, they may not fully understand what an earthquake is, even if they just went through one. Children understand events based on their own experiences, which are more limited than adults' experiences. It is important for children to understand what an earthquake is in order to help them cope with their reactions to the earthquake and its aftermath.

This section will help you assist your child understand in earthquakes, his or her experiences during and after the earthquake, and what has happened to their family, friends, and community as a result of the disaster.

### WHY DO EARTHQUAKES HAPPEN?

The surface of the Earth is made up of many large, slow moving sheets of rock called tectonic plates. When different plates of rock come in contact with each other, parts of the plates sometimes get caught or stuck as they try to move past each other. Pressure builds in the area that gets stuck until finally the rocks break in a sudden, violent movement. The shaking of the ground that happens when the rocks break is what we call an earthquake. A huge amount of energy is released when an earthquake occurs. This energy ripples out in what is called seismic waves, causing much of the damage seen during an earthquake.

An earthquake can cause a natural disaster. Natural disasters are large, catastrophic events that are caused by forces of nature. Natural disasters often result in a lot of death and destruction. Hurricanes are another example of a force of nature that can cause a natural disaster. Earthquakes can be especially scary because unlike a hurricane, they often happen without any warning.



### JOINT ACTIVITY: Earthquake Vocabulary

It will help if your child understands some earthquake-related terms frequently used in the media. Below is a list of keywords that you and your child can discuss. Some children may not want to discuss every word. You can read these words out loud and have your child choose which ones to learn more about. If necessary, look up information on the Internet or at a library, or ask someone who may know. The USGS Earthquake Hazards Program has an excellent glossary of earthquake-related terms at: <http://earthquake.usgs.gov/learn/glossary/>.

Earthquake	Iodine Pills	Evacuation	Tsunami
Radiation	Hydrogen/Helium	Nuclear Power Plant	Aftershock
Magnitude	Seismograph	Liquefaction	Tectonic Plate
Richter Scale	Tsunami Watch/Warning	Seismic Wave	Fault
Epicenter	Seismologist	Subduction Zone	Geology



## What Is An Earthquake?

The surface of the Earth is made up of large pieces of rock called tectonic "plates." These plates move very slowly around our planet. Sometimes, two plates get caught or stuck as they try to move past each other. When this happens, the parts of rock that get stuck rub against each other, which causes a lot of pressure to build. When too much pressure builds, the rocks suddenly break apart! The shaking of the ground that happens when the rocks break apart is called an earthquake. Earthquakes can be scary because they often happen without any warning.

An earthquake can cause a natural disaster. A natural disaster is a big event that is caused by a force of nature. A lot of damage happens and many people can get hurt or killed in a disaster. A hurricane is another force of nature that can cause a natural disaster.

1. Can you name two other forces of nature that can cause a natural disaster? List them below.

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2. People who have been through an earthquake say that the ground shakes or moves, and a lot of things fall or break. Some people also hear loud sounds that remind them of thunder or a train going by. What was the earthquake like for you? Below, draw or write about what you saw or heard during the earthquake. Use another sheet of paper if you need more space.



## Understanding What Happened?

People who live through a natural disaster usually never forget the event. Memories often stay with people for the rest of their lives. However, the memories of children may fade over time. The activities in this section will help you and your child reflect on the earthquake and what has happened since. They will also help your child understand how significant an event the earthquake was.

When your child is finished working on the activities in this section, review his or her responses and talk about the earthquake. If your child has any incorrect information, clear up any misunderstandings your child may have.

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Recovery Timeline

Together with your child, create a timeline highlighting important events before and after the earthquake. Begin by having your child mark important events in his or her life that happened a few days or weeks before the disaster (such as a birthday). Include the day and time the earthquake struck and list significant effects the disaster had on the child, his/her family, and community. Keep track of recovery and rebuilding efforts and include significant events in the timeline. You can place the timeline in a scrapbook (see below).

Example:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Highlight</u>
July 27, 2011	My birthday
August 23, 2011	Earthquake hit.
October 6, 2011	My school re-opened.

Note: Older children may be more interested in exact figures (e.g., earthquake intensity, tsunami heights, damage estimates, locations affected) while younger children may be interested in more general information (countries affected).

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Your Earthquake Story

As survivors of the earthquake, you and your child have a special story to tell about your experiences during and after the disaster. Together, create your own "earthquake story." Draw pictures or write about your disaster experiences. Begin your story before the earthquake struck and describe what has happened to you and your child since. You can continue to add to your story over the next few weeks and months. If you want, you can place your story in a scrapbook along with newspaper articles, pictures, and other mementos of the disaster. Who knows, one day your children and grandchildren will read your story!





## Understanding What Happened

Being in an earthquake is something many people never forget. In the future, your children may read about the earthquake that you just went through. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) collects information on earthquakes. The information includes where the earthquake happened and how big the earthquake was. This information is important because it helps scientists learn more about earthquakes. It also helps people build better and safer buildings.



### Assignment: Disaster Detective

Hi! I'm Tommie Tsunami. I'm a seismologist who works for the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). A seismologist is a scientist who studies earthquakes. Part of my job is to gather information about earthquakes that happen in your area. Usually, computers keep track of the information for me. However, when the earthquake hit, the computers stopped working! I need some help in filling in the missing information. Can you help me by doing some research and filling out the form below as best you can? Good luck and thanks for your help!

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*The day the earthquake hit your area*

**Seismologist:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Your name*

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Town where you live*

**Time of Earthquake:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Time when the quake first hit*

**Epicenter:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Area where the earthquake was centered*

**Distance:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*How far your town is from the epicenter*

**Magnitude:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Richter Scale reading of quake*

**Depth:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*How far below ground the earthquake occurred*

**Tsunami:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*Did a tsunami hit your area? Yes/No*

**Tsunami Height:** \_\_\_\_\_ **feet**  
*If a tsunami hit, how high the water got in your area?*

**Observations** (describe the weather on the day the hurricane hit). **Use another sheet of paper if you need more space to write:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Understanding How Your Child Feels

Disasters affect people in different ways. A person's personality, life history, and experiences during and after a disaster all play a role in shaping the person's response. Because some people are more affected than others, reactions to a disaster may differ greatly from person to person.

For many children and adults, upsetting events such as an earthquake or tsunami bring about strong feelings and mixed emotions. As time passes, their feelings about the disaster may change. This is normal for people who experience a disaster or other traumatic event. Keep in mind that there may be days and times when you will feel better than others.

### **The Importance Of Asking Children How They Are Feeling**

Research conducted after other disasters shows that parents, teachers, and other caregivers are often surprised to learn how much a child was affected by the event. There can be many reasons for this. For example, children may not tell adults about their feelings because they notice that the adults are already upset and they do not want to upset them further. This shows why it is important for you to talk with your child directly about his or her thoughts and feelings.

The activities in this section will help you understand how you and your child are feeling about the earthquake. They will also help you talk about feelings with your child. It is a good idea to occasionally repeat these activities, as your child's feelings may change over time.

#### **Adult Activity: How Do You Feel?**

How do you feel about the earthquake? Write your feelings in the columns below. How have your feelings changed since the earthquake first struck? What has stayed the same? If there are any strong emotions you still have that you feel uncomfortable with, such as a lot of anger or sadness, it may help to talk to a counselor about them.

##### **How I felt after the disaster first hit**

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##### **How I feel now**

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#### **Adult Activity: Understanding Different Feelings**

Children may not be familiar with all of the feelings listed in the activity at the top of Page 9. You can help your child understand these feelings by providing examples. Try and make it a fun game! You can make faces that mimic the different feelings or act out different situations and have your child guess what the feeling is.



## How I Feel About Earthquake

After a disaster, people often have many different feelings. Some of the feelings may change or go away after a few days or weeks. Complete the activities below to show your feelings about the earthquake that hit your area.

1. Below are pictures and words that describe how some people feel after an earthquake. Circle the faces - or create new ones - to show how you felt when the earthquake first happened.



Afraid



Angry



Cautious



Confident



Confused



Curious



Disappointed



Disbelief



Disgusted



Enraged



Frustrated



Guilty



Happy



Horrified



Hurt



Lonely



Miserable



Nervous



Optimistic



Sad



Scared



Shocked



Surprised



Undecided



Upset



Worried



2. Below, draw or write how you feel now about the earthquake or about what has happened since. You can use the words or pictures above to tell about your feelings.



## Tips For Talking To Children About Feelings

Over the next few months (and even years), there are likely to be more developments related to the earthquake as recovery continues. In order to understand how your child is reacting to these events, it will be important that you talk to your child about his or her feelings on a regular basis. Pick a quiet place to talk, away from distractions. Also, try to have a regular time to talk, such as before dinner or after school. Talking right before bedtime is not a good idea because your child may have trouble sleeping after discussing upsetting events.

Sometimes your child's concerns may have to do with the disaster. Other times, your child may want to talk about other events. Either way, the advice on this page will help you understand your child's feelings and worries. If you feel you are having trouble with your own feelings, it is a good idea to talk with another adult before talking with your child.

### **Here are some guidelines you can use when talking to your child:**

- Listen to your child's feelings rather than controlling the conversation yourself.
- Acknowledge and normalize your child's statements by making comments like these:  
*"It sounds like you were very scared."      "That part made you feel sad."      "It's okay to feel that way."*
- Be neutral. Do not judge or criticize your child. Make comments like these:  
*"That's interesting."      "Tell me more about it."      "What do you mean?"*
- It's okay to say *"I don't know"* if your child asks a question you cannot answer.
- Express your own feelings, but try to avoid alarming or upsetting your child.
- Pay attention to behaviors that show your child has strong feelings, such as:  
Fidgeting or squirming.  
Poor eye contact (doesn't look at you while talking).  
Facial expressions that show anger, sadness, or worry.
- Keep in mind that listening to your child is a good way of showing emotional support. Research shows that children with greater emotional support after disasters report less stress.

On the next page, there are sentences for your child to complete about their day and how they are feeling. You can copy the page or have your child write answers in a daily journal. Each evening, review your child's answers and talk about what he or she wrote. You can even keep a journal of your own daily thoughts and activities. This will help you gain perspective on how you are coping with the earthquake and its aftermath.





## How I Feel Today

How do you feel today? Below are some sentences to help you tell about your day and how you are feeling. Finish the sentences as best you can. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

My Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Today, I \_\_\_\_\_

The best thing that happened to me today was \_\_\_\_\_

The thing that bothered me the most today was \_\_\_\_\_

Today, I played \_\_\_\_\_

What I thought about most today was \_\_\_\_\_

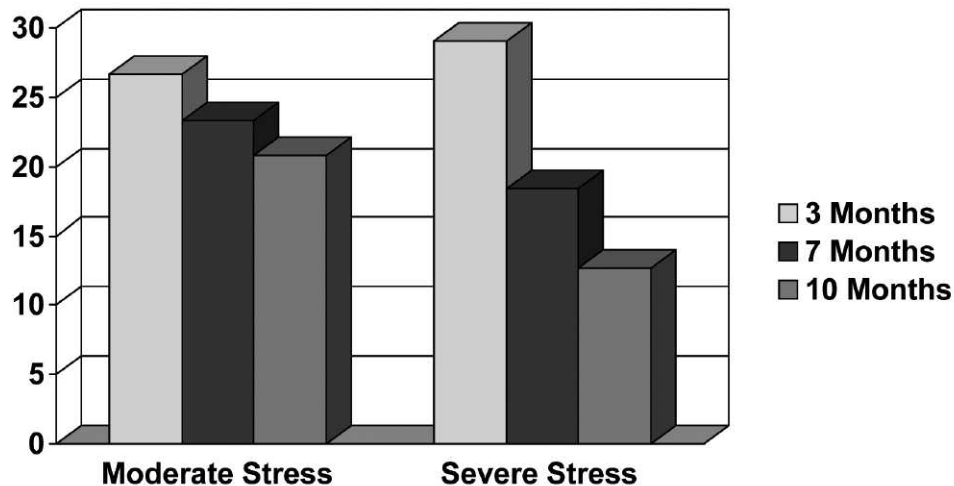
Tomorrow, I want to \_\_\_\_\_



## Understanding Your Child's Stress Reactions

Feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger, and fear are common reactions to a natural disaster. Other reactions are common as well, such as nightmares and difficulty sleeping. It is normal for children and adults to experience a variety of stress reactions after a traumatic event. In fact, millions of people have reported suffering from stress reactions after other disasters.

### **Percentage Of Children Reporting Stress Reactions After Hurricane Andrew**



Although stress reactions are normal, they can create problems. For example, difficulty sleeping may make a person more tired, affecting their work performance. Trouble concentrating can hurt a child's performance in school. While stress reactions are common after a disaster, they often lessen or go away after a few weeks. However, if reactions last longer than a couple of months or interfere with everyday activities, a person may need professional help.

Sometimes, reactions to a disaster are severe and signal a person is suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD is a set of trauma symptoms that occur in response to a traumatic event. PTSD can occur in both adults and children. People who suffer from PTSD need to speak to a professional. For more information on PTSD, ask a counselor or visit the National Institute of Mental Health's PTSD website at [www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml).

### **Adult Activity: Evaluate Your Child's Stress Reactions**

Have your child complete the activity on the next page. If your child circled "A LOT" or "SOMETIMES" to any of the questions, use the answer key below to see what coping strategies in the book may help your child with that difficulty.

#### **Questions circled**

5 and 14  
1, 2, 3, 4 and 11  
6, 7, 8 and 13  
9, 10, 12 and 15  
16, 17 and 18

#### **Possible Problems**

Fears and Worries  
"Re-experiencing" the event  
Avoidance or Emotional Numbing  
Physical Symptoms  
Other specific reactions

#### **Helpful Coping Sections**

see Pages 8, 16, 20 and 28  
see Pages 8, 16, 20 and 32  
see Pages 8, 16, 28 and 36  
see Pages 16, 20, 22 and 32  
see Pages 18, 26, 34 and 36



## How I Have Been Feeling

The sentences below ask about your thoughts and feelings about the earthquake that hit your town. Show how you have been thinking or feeling for the past few weeks by checking the box that best describes how you feel for each sentence.

	<b><u>A LOT</u></b>	<b><u>SOMETIMES</u></b>	<b><u>NEVER</u></b>
1. I get scared, afraid, or upset when I think about the earthquake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I keep thinking about what happened.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think about the earthquake, even when I don't want to.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I have bad dreams.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I worry that another earthquake or something bad might happen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I don't enjoy things I usually like to do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I feel that people really don't understand how I feel now.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I feel so scared, upset, or sad that I can't even talk or cry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I feel more jumpy and nervous now than before the earthquake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I have not been sleeping well.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Thoughts or feelings about the earthquake get in the way of my remembering things, like what I learned in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. It is hard to pay attention in school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I try to stay away from things that remind me of the earthquake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I worry about things that didn't bother me before, like being away from my family.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I have more stomachaches, headaches, or other sick feelings since the earthquake.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I have been doing things now that I wouldn't do before, like getting into fights, talking back, or disobeying more.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I get mad or angry at friends and family more than normal.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I feel sad about all the things that have happened	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Adapted with permission from Frederick, C.J., Pynoos, R., & Nader, K. (1992). Reaction Index to Psychic Trauma Form C. Manuscript, UCLA.)



# Who Is At Risk For Stress Reactions?

If you pay attention to your child's reactions, you will have a good idea of how to help your child. In general, most children will be able to cope with their reactions to an earthquake or other stressful event when provided with some assistance from caring adults. The coping activities on Pages 18-25 will be helpful for most children in coping with an earthquake or other traumatic event (for more specific coping strategies for certain reactions, please see Pages 26-37). Some children will need more support than others in coping with their reactions. A child may be at risk for more severe reactions and will need to be watched more closely if they:

### During the disaster...

- Lost a loved one, friend or pet.
- Were hurt or felt they were going to be hurt.
- Thought they were going to die or felt very upset during or right after the disaster.
- Lost their house or belongings in the disaster.

### Before or after the disaster...

- Have academic difficulties.
- Have experienced previous trauma.
- Have a history of behavioral or emotional problems.
- Have had other major stressful events happen to them (parents get a divorce, parent loses job, new sibling born, etc.).
- Have a significant change in their way of life because of the disaster (attend a new school, moved to a new home or town, etc.)

If a child was experiencing stress before the earthquake, he or she may be particularly vulnerable to experiencing stress after. Also, if another earthquake or other stressful event occurs, children and adults may re-experience some of their initial reactions. Repeat the activities in this section if you are unsure about how your child is feeling

## JOINT ACTIVITY: Keeping A Balance

One way to help children cope with a disaster is to build up the "resources" available for support. Use the balance beam below to help with this activity. On the left side, write down the "risks" or things that are causing stress for your child. On the right side, list the "resources" your child has available for support. Resources can be people such as family members, friends, teachers, or school counselors. Resources can also be organizations such as a school club, a Scout group, or places like a house of worship. Try to get the "resources" to balance or outweigh the "risks."



**MAINTAIN A BALANCE  
OF SUPPORT**

**Risks/Stressor**

**Resources/Support:**

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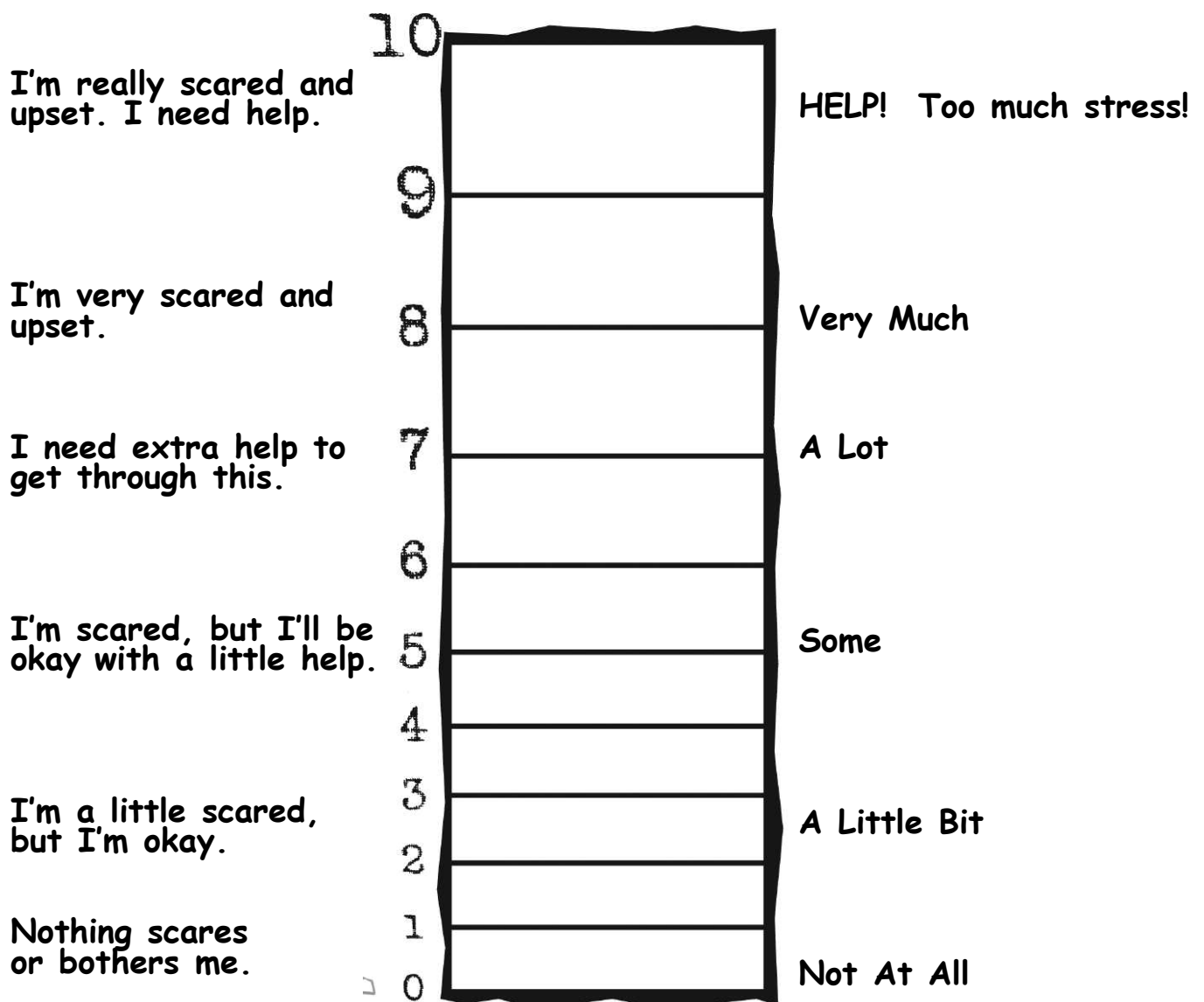




## Measure Your Stress

The Richter Scale was created to measure the strength of an earthquake. The higher the number on the Richter Scale, the more powerful the earthquake is. The strongest earthquake ever measured hit the country of Chile in 1960. That earthquake measured 9.5 on the Richter Scale!

The "Stress Scale" below is like a Richter Scale, except it measures feelings instead of earthquakes. How scared or upset are you because of the earthquake or because of what has happened to you since it struck? Read the Stress Scale first. Then, starting from the bottom, color in the stress graph to the number that best shows how you feel. Number 1 means you feel very little stress. Number 10 means you feel a lot of stress and want some help.





## Understanding How Your Child Copes

People cope with their stress reactions in many ways. You and your child have to find ways that work best for each of you. Some ways of coping are more effective than others. For example, some positive ways to cope with stressful events include talking about how you feel, solving problems, trying to remain calm, and trying to look at the positive side of things.

Some ways of coping are not helpful and can cause more harm than good. Yelling, getting angry, and blaming others are examples of unhelpful ways of coping that can lead to new problems. Children who use unhelpful ways of coping have more problems dealing with traumatic events. It is important to recognize when your child is not coping well and help him or her find better ways to deal with stress.

The questions on the next page will help your child show how he or she copes with stressful events. Use the answer key below to help you understand your child's responses. Try to encourage positive ways of coping with events related to the earthquake or another upsetting event. Although you may not know what specific events are upsetting your child, it always helps to have your child use positive coping strategies.

### **Some Positive Coping Strategies**

- Maintain normal routines.
- Talk with friends/family/coworkers.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Exercise/stay physically healthy.
- Get some rest/take time off/vacation.
- Reduce exposure to media.
- Write about thoughts and experiences.
- Listen to soothing, calming music.
- Volunteer in the community/help others.
- Look at the positive side of things.
- Talk to a counselor/join a support group.

### **Adult Activity: Identifying How Your Child Copes**

While your child works on the activity on the next page, think about how he or she usually copes with bad events. On a separate sheet of paper, write down the positive and negative ways your child copes. When you are both finished, review your answers together.

#### **Positive Ways My Child Copes**

#### **Negative Ways My Child Copes**

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### **Answer Key To Child Coping Test On Page 17**

Items #3, 6, 9 and 12 are positive coping strategies – encourage your child to use them. For example, item #3 reflects “having a positive outlook,” item #6 reflects “problem solving” as well as “talking about things that are upsetting,” item #9 reflects “keeping calm,” and item #12 reflects “seeking support and comfort from others.” These coping strategies can help your child deal with stress. Additional ideas are covered in other sections of this book. “Seeking information” and “finding distraction” can also be helpful ways of coping.

The remaining items on the child's page (#1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, and 11) are unhelpful ways of coping. They usually don't help a difficult situation and can make things worse. For example, items #1 and 2 reflect “social withdrawal,” items #4 and 5 reflect “blaming self or others,” item #7 reflects “wishful thinking,” items #8 and 11 reflect “angry feelings,” and item #10 reflects “feeling helpless.” If your child circled some of these, try to help him or her focus on positive of coping with stress. Again, some sections in this book will give you other good ideas.



## How I Cope With Things That Happen

Below is a list of things that people do to solve problems or feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you have done to feel better about the earthquake or other bad things that have happened to you. Circle YES or NO to tell if you do the things listed in each sentence.

### How I Cope

### Do you do this?

1. I stay by myself.	YES	NO
2. I keep quiet about the bad things that happen.	YES	NO
3. I try to see the good side of things.	YES	NO
4. I blame myself for causing the hurricane to happen.	YES	NO
5. I blame someone else for causing the hurricane to happen.	YES	NO
6. I try to fix the bad things by doing something or talking to someone.	YES	NO
7. I always wish the bad things had never happened.	YES	NO
8. I yell, scream, or get mad.	YES	NO
9. I try to calm myself down.	YES	NO
10. I don't do anything because the bad things can't be fixed.	YES	NO
11. I get mad or angry at others.	YES	NO
12. I try to feel better by spending time with my family, other grownups, or friends.	YES	NO

(Adapted from the KIDCOPE with permission from Spirito, A., Stark, L.J., & Williams, C. (1988). Development of a brief checklist to assess in coping in pediatric patients. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 13, 555-574.)



## Things That Can Help – Normal Routines

Some of the most upsetting aspects of disasters are the disruptions they cause to everyday life. Normal activities and routines provide children and adults with a sense of comfort, as their days are more predictable. If these activities and routines are suddenly changed or disrupted, they can shake a person’s feelings of safety and security.

When an earthquake hits, especially a powerful one, everyday activities and routines may be disrupted for a very long time. Schools may close, power may be out, and clean water may not be available for weeks or longer. Activities that your child may normally participate in, such as sports leagues or dance classes, may be cancelled. If you and your child had to move to another area because of the disaster, your child’s “normal” life may have changed dramatically.

To cope with disruptions and changes, it will help to keep your child in as normal a routine as possible. Although this may be difficult, particularly if your area was hard-hit or a member of the family passed away, try making arrangements with family and friends who can help. If your family has evacuated or moved, try to establish a new or temporary routine for your child. For example, have your child do chores at a given time each day, have a regular reading or study hour, and have a regular time for exercise. Be creative and develop a plan that is as similar to your child’s normal routine as possible.

This section will help you and your child identify your “normal routines.” You may wish to copy Page 19 and let your child complete their activities for both normal weekday and weekend routines, as these routines usually differ. For younger kids, this may be best done as a joint activity.

### Adult Activity: Identify Your Normal Routines

In times of stress, it is important to monitor your own routine. Over the next few weeks, keep track of your day. On a sheet of paper, write down each activity you do and the amount of time you spend doing it. List your activities in the following categories: Children, Home, Family (other than children), Friends, Work, and Self. At the end of each week, add up the total amount of time spent in each category.

	Children	Home	Family	Friends	Work	Self
Monday						
Tuesday						
Wednesday						
Thursday						
Friday						
Saturday						
Sunday						
<b>Total hours:</b>						

You may find that you need to have more time to yourself. If so, adjust your routine and make extra time to relax, spend with a friend or loved one, or have more fun. If you feel relaxed and in control, it will be easier for you to cope with your own challenges and assist your family with theirs.

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Add Some Fun To Your Daily Routines

Together, review your child’s routine list from Page 19. Your child’s routine may have changed since before the earthquake – that is okay. Have your child highlight or mark with a star his or her favorite activities. Then, make a list of favorite activities you and your child enjoy doing together. When possible, try to add some of these favorite activities into both of your daily routines. Also, try to make time for your child to visit friends, as friends are an important source of social support.



## My Daily Routines

What do you do each day? On the left side, list things that you do on a normal day. When you are done, complete the clocks on the right side. Draw in the missing hands on each clock to show what time you normally do that activity.

### What I normally do

In the morning:

---

---

---

---

---

In the afternoon:

---

---

---

---

---

In the evening:

---

---

---

---

---

Before bedtime:

---

---

---

---

---

Are there any favorite activities you have not done recently that you would like to do? If so, write about them below.

---

---

---

---

### Complete the clocks



What time I normally wake up.



What time I normally eat lunch.



What time I normally go to bed.



## Things That Can Help – Reducing Exposure

Another way to help children cope with an earthquake is to reduce their exposure to upsetting images that may “remind” them of the disaster. Children who see upsetting pictures or videos of a traumatic event usually report more stress than children who are not exposed to such images. This is because visual images are ways of re-experiencing a traumatic event. These upsetting reminders can lead to reactions such as increased fears, bad dreams, and trouble sleeping. Try to help your child avoid images of disasters and disaster-related damage.

Because images can be disturbing, your child will feel better if you limit his or her viewing of disaster-related programs on TV or the Internet. This will be particularly helpful if another earthquake happens. Programs to limit include the news or special programs about earthquakes or families who were hurt by a disaster. These types of programs may be prominent on TV if another earthquake occurs in the United States or another part of the world, or around the anniversary of the earthquake.

### **Prepare vs. Scare**

Many news stations report on disasters in a dramatic and sometimes scary way. One way to reduce stress is to turn the television or computer off once you and your family have the information you need (e.g., updates about the recovery process). Too much viewing will scare, rather than prepare.

### **Adult Activity: Develop Your Own Television Viewing Guide**

Develop a plan to help limit your child’s exposure to upsetting pictures of disasters or other scary events. Follow these rules:

**LIMIT** – the amount of time your child watches television. Choose ahead of time how much TV your child can watch each day. Turn the television off when the time is up. Limit your own viewing as well to set a good example.

**PLAN** – with your child, in advance, what programs he or she will watch. Use a TV Guide or other TV listing to help you decide. Don’t let your child change channels, even during commercials. If you are unsure of a program’s rating, go to [www.tvguide.com](http://www.tvguide.com) for a ratings guide.

**PARTICIPATE** – in watching programs with your child (or watch at least one episode of a series). You can occasionally ask if there is anything that your child has questions about or that bothers them. Turn off a program if it becomes upsetting and talk to your child about it.

**ENCOURAGE** – your child to participate in other fun activities like reading, sports, or hobbies. Make sure you have non-electronic games available in case you lose electricity. These activities will provide a distraction from upsetting events and help your child feel more in control.

### **JOINT ACTIVITY: A Fun Distraction**

After an earthquake, the media will likely focus on events related to the disaster. While it is important to stay informed, spending too much time watching such information on TV or on the Internet may not be helpful. It can add to already high stress levels. You have to find a balance. It will help if you and your child do something fun together as a distraction. If possible, do something that involves exercise such as playing football, riding a bike, or taking a walk. You can also play cards, board games, or watch a movie. Let your child participate in some favorite activities he or she listed on the next page or spend time with a friend.



## What I Like

Draw a picture of yourself and fill in the information.

Hi! My name is: \_\_\_\_\_ . These are some of my favorite things!

My favorite TV shows:

My favorite Internet sites:

My favorite movies:

My favorite games:

### List your favorites for each category:

My favorite hobbies are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite sports are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite musicians are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My favorite books are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Things That Can Help – Staying Physically Healthy

Stress affects people physically as well as mentally. After a stressful event, many people do not feel like eating or may have trouble sleeping. These changes make it harder for a person to cope with stress. Just as it is important to continue normal activities, it is also important to stay active and healthy after a disaster. This is especially true for children. A child who is healthy and physically fit will find it easier to cope with stress. In fact, everyone does better when they feel strong and healthy.

The activities in this section are designed to help you identify changes in your child’s eating, sleeping, and exercise habits. They may also improve your child’s overall health, including diet and physical condition. Have your child complete the activity on the next page while you finish the one below.

### Adult Activity: Track Your Child’s Health

Observe your child over the next few days. Note any parts of your child’s health behaviors that are a problem or that have changed recently. Write any problems or changes you have noticed in the following categories:

**Eating meals:**

**Sleeping or resting:**

**Exercise:**

**Increased complaints:**

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Coping Chart

Look at the physical changes you have noticed in your child. If some areas need improvement, work together on creating a “Coping Chart.” List things you and your child can do to better cope with any physical changes. Include child’s answers from the next page. Some examples are:

**Eating (lack of appetite):**

- Drink a milkshake with fruit.
- Take vitamins.
- Have a regular family mealtime.
- Purchase healthy snacks (raisins, carrots).

**Trouble falling or staying asleep:**

- Sleep with a light or night-light on.
- Snuggle with a favorite doll.
- Play soft music.
- Count backwards from 100.

**Exercise (lack of):**

- Join a sports league or youth group.
- Learn a new sport (tennis or dance lessons).
- Develop a personal exercise routine.
- Do outdoor activities (hiking, biking, etc.).

**Increased physical complaints:**

- Have child checked by family doctor.
- Practice a relaxation exercise to reduce stress.



## How I Stay Healthy

Staying healthy and being in good shape can help you deal with some of the things that bother you. In the boxes below, write or draw what you do to keep healthy for each category. Some examples are given to help you get started.

### My favorite healthy foods

Apples



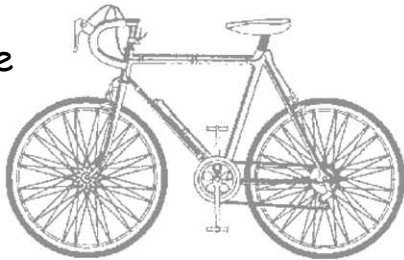
### How I relax before bedtime

Listen to music



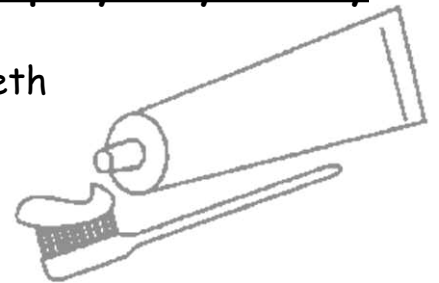
### My favorite ways to exercise

Ride my bike



### How I keep my body healthy

Brush my teeth





## Things That Can Help – Helping Others

Helping others can be a positive way to cope with feelings. By assisting others, your child will feel needed and that he or she is contributing something positive in the aftermath of a disaster. Helping also provides an excellent opportunity to teach your child a lesson about character and the virtues of respect, compassion, volunteering, and doing good deeds.

Helping can be done in many ways. It can be as simple as opening a door for somebody, completing chores at home, donating goods to families in need, volunteering time at a local animal shelter, or assisting others with cleanup efforts. Be creative. Use your talents and strengths to think of ways to help others, but remember to stay within your limits. Below are some suggestions on ways you and your child can help others in your community

### **Volunteering**

Volunteering your time to assist a worthy cause or help others is an excellent way to support your community. Getting started is easy. Find out about community-service organizations in your area and choose several that interest you. Then, contact them. Most organizations would love to have assistance. Encourage your child to volunteer as well by choosing projects that you can work on together. If you have friends or family that have been severely affected by the earthquake, volunteer to assist them with chores, errands, or babysitting. Many residents affected by disasters cannot afford, or are unable, to repair or rebuild their homes. You can assist by volunteering to repair damages or to help clean up debris. Consider volunteering at your child's school as well.



To find out about volunteer opportunities in your community, dial 2-1-1, go to the websites [www.volunteersolutions.org](http://www.volunteersolutions.org) or [www.liveunited.org](http://www.liveunited.org), or contact your local United Way.

### **Donating**

You and your child can also help by donating to a local charity or disaster relief drive. Children can donate toys, clothes, dolls, books, and other items. Adults can donate money, goods, or services. Your business can help out by donating in-kind services or goods to the community. For example, if you own or work in a restaurant or grocery store, have the business donate free snacks or drinks to volunteers working on a community-service project. Contact an agency that is working with earthquake survivors to find out how you may assist. The needs of families may change over time, but many will continue to need support.

### **JOINT ACTIVITY: Participate In A Cleanup**

After a disaster, even the environment will need assistance in recovering. While earthquakes and tsunamis are a natural occurrence, man-made debris entering the environment is not. Plastics, glass, roofing material, and other debris that enters into the environment becomes pollution. These items may remain in the environment for hundreds of years before biodegrading, all the while posing a health and safety threat to both humans and animals. Together with your child, participate in a beach, park, school, or neighborhood cleanup. If you can't find one, organize your own.



## Helping Others

Many people like to help others after a disaster. No matter how old you are or where you live, you can do things to help other people. For example, you can open a door for somebody or complete an extra chore at home. You can even join a service club and participate in a community-service project.

### How I Can Help!

Below, list things you can do to help others. When you are finished, go over the list with an adult and choose which ones you would like to do. You can even add some of these to your daily routines. For example "I can help my teacher by handing out papers."

I can help \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

I can help \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

I can help \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

I can help \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_.

### Weekly Helping Chart

Each day, do at least one good deed that helps someone else. Write down what you did to help in the spaces below. At the end of the week, add up how many good deeds you did to help others. Good job!

Day	Date	What I Did To Help
Mon		
Tue		
Wed		
Thu		
Fri		
Sat		
Sun		



## Coping With Changes

An earthquake can be a life-changing event. The powerful tremors can alter landscapes as well as the lives of people. Those who live through a large earthquake or other traumatic event commonly experience changes. Some changes may be dramatic, such as a change in one's way of life (e.g., a move to a new city, a new job, or changes brought on by the loss of a loved one). Other changes may be subtle, such as a change in the way a person feels about something (e.g., no longer feels the same way about the neighborhood). Still, some people may experience little or no change at all.

How you cope with changes, and your attitude towards them, will determine how changes affect you. It helps to look at the positive side of things, no matter what changes occur. The activities in this section will help you identify changes that have occurred for you and your child since the earthquake. For each change you identify, think of a helpful way to deal with that change.

### Adult Activity: Changes Since The Earthquake

Like others who have faced devastating earthquakes, you and your child are coping with the aftermath. Some people may feel that they were not as affected by the disaster. For others, the disaster may have brought about significant changes. What changes, if any, has the earthquake had on you? Divide a sheet of paper into five columns: Home, Work, Community, Thoughts/Feelings, and Other (parts of your life). In each column, write down changes that have occurred in that part of your life since the earthquake. Have the changes been for better or for worse? How have you coped with these changes? Remember, you can have changes in thoughts or feelings as well as physical changes.

HOME	WORK	COMMUNITY	THOUGHTS/ FEELINGS	OTHER

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Changes

In every disaster or tragedy, there are some positive outcomes to hold on to. For example, after the 1989 earthquake that hit San Francisco, California, building codes were made stricter so that safer buildings would be built. This is an example of a positive change that came out of a tragedy. While it may be difficult to find positive outcomes from a disaster, looking at the positives can help you and your child cope with changes as well as feelings of sadness and loss.

Together with your child, list positive changes that have occurred as a result of the earthquake. You can divide them into categories, such as positive changes for your family, your community, and in other ways. Also, list what lessons you and your child learned that will help you better prepare for and cope with future disasters.



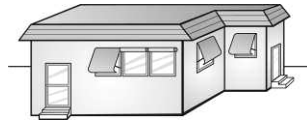
## Changes Since The Earthquake

Earthquakes are powerful forces that can change a lot of things. Earthquakes can even change the land around you. For example, earthquakes can knock down buildings and tsunamis can wash away islands. Earthquakes can also change how and where people live. For example, an earthquake may damage a home and force a family to move somewhere else. Sometimes earthquakes change the way people think or feel about something. For example, a person whose home was damaged by an earthquake may not feel like living in that home anymore.

What changes has the earthquake had on you? Below, write down changes the earthquake caused in each of the categories. Some changes may last only for a short period of time. Other changes may last longer. Circle the changes that have gotten back to normal (the way they were before the earthquake hit).

### Changes Caused By The Earthquake:

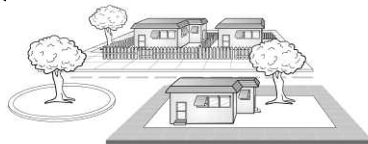
Changes at home:



Changes at school:



Changes in my neighborhood:



Changes in how I feel about things:



Other changes that earthquake caused:



## Coping With Fears And Worries – Identifying Fears & Worries

After experiencing a traumatic event, children and adults often feel fearful and worried. These feelings are common after a disaster that causes a lot of damage and disrupts lives, such as the earthquake. Disasters can bring about a whole new set of fears and worries that may not have been present before. They can also increase fears that already exist. For example, after an earthquake, it is common for children and adults to have more worries about their personal safety and the safety of loved ones, or fears of future quakes.

Unlike a hurricane, earthquakes cannot be predicted. Earthquakes happen suddenly, without warning. Because of this, earthquakes can be extremely scary. Also, large aftershocks can occur for months after a major quake. These are some reasons why fears and worries are common after an earthquake.

While fears and worries are normal, your child will need help in dealing with them if they interfere with your child's activities (such as keeping them from going to school or playing with friends). In order for you to help your child cope with his or her worries, you must understand the things your child worries about. This section is designed to help you and your child identify and cope with fears and worries.

Although your child may have fears related to the earthquake, keep in mind he or she may be more concerned about things unrelated to the disaster. Also, since worries can be learned through television and other media, we have included a section to help reduce media use (see Page 20). You might also find a relaxation exercise helpful (see Page 40). Because the focus of your child's worries may change over time, it is a good idea to repeat this section periodically.

### Adult Activity – What Are Your Worries?

Children, especially young children, can “learn” about potential sources of fear and worry by observing or listening to the adults around them, such as their parents and teachers. Because of this, it will be helpful for you to identify the things you worry about, and that you might unintentionally communicate to a child. On a sheet of paper, write down the fears and worries you currently have. You can divide these into subjects, such as worries concerning your family, your job, or your community. When you are finished, highlight the things that bother you the most.

### Adult Activity – Your Child's Worries

Do you know what your child worries about? Often, parents are surprised by the kinds of things that bother their children or underestimate the degree of their child's concerns. While your child completes the activity on the next page, make a list of the things that you think he or she worries about. Highlight the ones you feel bother your child the most. When finished, compare your answers with your child's. Which worries did you get correct? Which ones did you miss? Which of your child's fears or worries, if any, surprised you?





## What Do You Worry About?

Everybody has worries. Sometimes a worry can make you feel upset. This is because you "think" something bad might happen. For example, you might worry that you will get a bad grade on a test or that you will get a shot when you visit the doctor's office. Below, write down some of your worries that bother you.

Some worries can be very scary and may upset you more than others. To the right of each worry, circle the words that best explain how much that worry bothers you. Circle whether you think about that worry a little bit, sometimes, or a lot of the time.



My Worry

My worry bothers me:

_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot
_____	A little	Sometimes	A lot



# Coping With Fears and Worries - Lessening Fears & Worries

Although fears and worries are common and normal, they can become a problem. Learning how to cope with them is important. In general, talking to someone, gradually facing fears, and finding practical solutions are all positive ways of coping with fears and worries.

**Talk to someone** – Sometimes worries lessen when a child has someone to share them with. Help your child identify “worry friends” he or she can talk to when feeling worried or scared (see activity on Page 31). Have your child list trusted people in school (e.g., counselors, teachers), at home (e.g., parents, older siblings), and in the community (e.g., friends, relatives). Keep a list of your child’s worry friends’ names and telephone numbers on a piece of paper, and let your child carry a copy with them. This may help your child feel better.

**Gradually face fears** – If a child is able to face fears in a gradual and safe manner, he or she may become less fearful. For example, a child who is nervous about being left alone with a babysitter while a parent leaves the house may become less fearful if a parent does leave and return home safely on several occasions. Reward your child for facing fears. Do not reward your child’s fears by letting your child avoid school or chores, or by giving in to your child’s wishes because of fears and worries

**Find practical solutions** – Often, a worry can be lessened or overcome by thinking of a practical and simple plan to cope with that worry. For example, if your child is worried about starting a new school, think of ways to help your child cope with this worry. You can take a tour of the school with your child, have a family member drop off and pick up the child at school, and suggest the teacher assign a “classroom buddy” to assist your child. These simple solutions may help your child feel better about entering a new school or making new friends.

## JOINT ACTIVITY – Develop A Worry-Buster Plan

Developing a “Worry-Buster” plan to help your child deal with their fears or worries can be a fun activity. Obtain some blank notecards. On one side, have your child write down a fear or worry that bothers them (see Child Activity on Page 29). Then, together, think of positive things your child can do or think of to “bust that worry” and feel better! Write these helpful ideas on the back of the card. Your child can memorize the cards or carry copies with them. See the example below.



### Front (Worry):

Another earthquake will hit

### Back (Worry-Buster Ideas):

Limit viewing of TV coverage about earthquakes.
Let child help with storm preparations.
Go over family disaster plan.
Talk with child and answer any questions.



## Coping With Worries

Sometimes worries can be very upsetting. When a worry upsets you, it is important to talk with an adult about it. Talking about the things that bother you will help you feel better about them. Who can you talk to about your fears or worries? Think of some "worry friends" and list them below. A "worry friend" is someone you trust and can talk to when you feel upset or worried. Choose one or two adults at home, in your school, and in your neighborhood who can be your "worry friends." Ask a parent or other adult to help you with this activity.

### My Worry Friends:

At Home: \_\_\_\_\_

At School: \_\_\_\_\_

In My Neighborhood: \_\_\_\_\_

Another way to help you feel better about your worries is to create a Worry-Buster plan. Pick three of the worries you listed on Page 29 that bother you a lot and write them below. Then, with an adult, think of things you can do to beat that worry! Write your plan to BUST THAT WORRY on the right side.



My WORRY



My WORRY-BUSTER PLAN

1. \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_



## Coping With Intrusive Thoughts And Dreams

After a traumatic event, some children keep thinking about the event or “see images” related to the event in their mind, even though they don’t want to. For example, a child might keep thinking about an earthquake or might picture their house being flooded by a tsunami, even when they are in school or doing other activities. Sometimes these upsetting thoughts happen at bedtime and make it difficult for children to fall or stay asleep.

Some children may have bad memories of a prior disaster, and have worries, fears, or nightmares when there are “reminders” of the event (e.g., a loud noise or heavy rain). If this is the case with your child, you may find that experiencing another earthquake or disaster can make your child’s stress reactions even stronger.

Although unwanted thoughts and nightmares are common reactions during the first few weeks or months after a disaster, they can be stressful. If your child has these kinds of thoughts or images, or has nightmares or trouble sleeping, the activities in this section may be helpful.

One way you can help is by encouraging your child to focus on something positive when they have upsetting thoughts. If the thoughts happen at bedtime, it will help to have a routine that focuses on something pleasant and distracting, such as a bedtime story or playing relaxing music (see Normal Routines on Page 18). It will also help to limit television viewing (see Reducing Exposure, Page 20), promote good health (see Staying Physically Healthy, Page 22) and encourage your child to do more enjoyable things. Also, encourage your child to tell you about any nightmares, as it will help them go away.

### **JOINT ACTIVITY: STOP Bad Thoughts**

Ask your child if he or she has any thoughts about earthquakes, or if any “pictures” or “images” come into their head that bothers them. If so, tell your child that this is normal after something scary like an earthquake happens. Try to find out when these bad thoughts occur (e.g. at bedtime, in school, etc.). Next, explain to your child that when he or she has bad thoughts or images, they should STOP and think about something else. Tell your child that you will make a Stop Sign together to remind them to STOP and do something else when they are having bad thoughts.

Together, complete the next page. You may want to copy the page before you begin so your child can carry a copy with them. On the top half of the page is a STOP sign. Let your child color it in. Below the sign is a space for you and your child to write down OTHER things your child can do when he or she starts to have upsetting thoughts. This may depend on whether the thoughts occur during the day or at night. The following are examples to give you and your child some ideas.

#### **DAYTIME**

Call a friend

Call a parent

Read a book

Ride a bike

Hug a parent

Sing or hum a song

#### **NIGHTTIME or BEDTIME**

Read a story

Listen to music

Count backwards from 100

Practice relaxation (see Page 40)

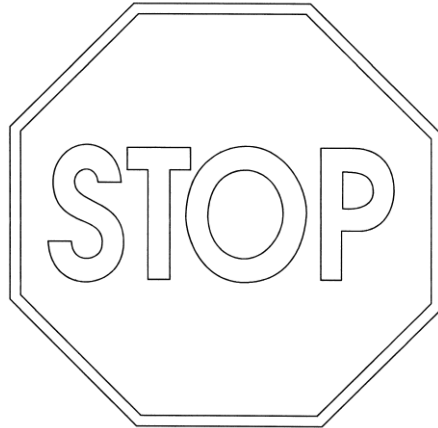
Draw a picture

Have parent “tuck” you into bed

(Adapted from Robin Gurwitch, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center)



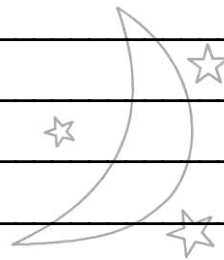
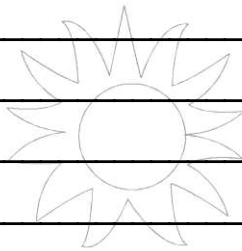
## When You Have Bad Thoughts Or Dreams:



...and think of OTHER things to do.

DAYTIME

NIGHTTIME or BEDTIME



When you have a bad thought or dream, it will help to STOP what you are doing and think of a peaceful or happy place. Below, draw or write about a peaceful place you can think of when you have a bad thought or dream



## Coping With Angry Feelings

It is not unusual for children and adults to have angry feelings after a disaster, especially if they were personally affected by it. In fact, everybody feels more stressed after a disaster, as life is more difficult. Disruptions caused by a disaster may last for a long period of time, which can add to feelings of stress. While things may be frustrating, remember that many people are in a similar situation. You and your child must find positive ways to deal with any angry feelings.

Often, children may want to “blame others” for bad things that happened, or they may be more irritable than usual. If your child is feeling angry or irritable, explain that it is okay to feel that way – that this is a very normal feeling. However, explain that it is NOT okay to take out angry feelings on other people. For example, it is okay to feel angry, but not okay to fight and argue with others. Also, it is not okay to do something mean to another person or an animal.

The activities in this section will help your child deal with angry feelings and resolve conflicts with others. They will also help you develop a plan to assist your child in managing his or her anger.

### Adult Activity: Develop An Anger Management Plan

Keep a brief diary of your child’s behavior over the next few weeks. Take notes on what happens before, during, and after each angry outburst. Use this to develop an “anger management” plan.

**Before** – Who does your child get angry at? What situations trigger the anger?

**During** – What does your child do when angry? What is his or her behavior?

**After** – What happens after? Do you discipline your child? Do you ignore the behavior?

If your child gets angry or annoyed at the same person or in the same situation, try changing the situation to prevent the angry outbursts. For example, if your child gets angry when a sibling changes the television channel, it may help to have family rules about television viewing. You can even have your child “talk through” angry feelings with the person who is the target.

Also, look at what happens after your child gets angry. Does your child get his or her way? Try not to ignore angry behavior or give in to your child’s misbehavior. Instead, calmly explain that “feeling angry” is okay, but “acting angry” is not. Have your child sit quietly until he or she calms down and then talk over what is bothering them to see if the situation can be resolved. If this doesn’t work, you may have to discipline your child. For example, depending on your child’s age, you can have them miss a favorite TV show, go to bed a half hour early, or do an extra chore.

### JOINT ACTIVITY: Role Playing

Have your child complete the activities on the following page. Afterward, go over your child’s ideas for positive things to do when feeling angry and help identify additional things they can do (e.g., writing, drawing). Then, play a “pretend” game with your child. You pretend to do something annoying and your child has to practice one of the positive things he or she listed in the activity at the bottom of Page 35. Involve other family members as well.



## Managing Angry Feelings

Some people may feel angry or upset after an earthquake. They may feel this way because an earthquake causes a lot of damage and makes life harder for them and their families.

1. Below, write down the ways in which the earthquake made life harder for you. Use another sheet of paper if you need more space.

**Example:** My house lost power and I was very cold.

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2. Life may also be harder for your family, friends, and teachers. Below, write how you think things are harder for the rest of your family, friends, and teachers.

**Example:** My father can't go to work because of the earthquake.

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Sometimes when bad things happen, people get angry or upset more than normal. It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to take your angry feelings out on other people or animals. If you are angry with someone or get into an argument, it will help if you follow these simple steps:



4. Think about what you can do to feel less angry without hurting anyone or anything else.

3. Slowly count backwards from 10 to 1.

2. Take three deep breaths very slowly.

1. Stop what you are doing and close your eyes.

3. On a separate sheet of paper, draw or write about "helpful" things you can do when you feel angry or get into an argument with someone. If you need some ideas, ask an adult for help.



## Coping With Sadness And Loss

After a traumatic event, children and adults may have feelings of sadness and loss. These feelings are common after a disaster, especially for people who lost a loved one or a pet, whose way of life has changed, or whose personal belongings were damaged or destroyed in the disaster. Even people who did not lose anything in the disaster may feel sad. There are many reasons why people feel sad. Sometimes they feel badly for people who lost their homes or businesses, they don't know what to do to help the situation, or because things just "aren't the same" since the earthquake first struck.

The activities in this section will help you and your child identify and talk about feelings of sadness and loss. If you are concerned about your child feeling sad, review the information below on "Recognizing Signs of Depression."

### **In general, some things that can help when you feel sad are:**

- Focusing on the positive things you still have (e.g., health, loved ones, etc.).
- Talking to a friend or family member when feeling "blue."
- Doing activities you normally enjoy .
- Doing things to help others (see Helping Others on Page 24 for some ideas).

### **Special note for parents: Recognizing Signs of Depression**

Feeling sad, depressed, and irritable is common after a traumatic event. These feelings may be a part of normal bereavement or mourning. However, if the feelings last for three or more weeks or interfere with your daily life, it may help to seek professional advice and counseling.

#### **Some signs of depression in children include:**

- Persistent sad or irritable mood.
- Loss of interest in usual activities.
- Changes in appetite or weight.
- Feeling worthless or unloved.
- Repeated thoughts of suicide or death.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping.
- Loss of energy.
- Lacks interest in playing with friends; bored.
- Poor school performance.
- Unexplained irritability; crying; complaining.
- Increased anger, hostility, or irritability.
- Extreme sensitivity to failure or rejection.
- Frequent, non-specific physical complaints.
- Difficulties in personal relationships with family or friends.

### **JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Coping Ideas**

Together, complete the activity on the next page. Focusing on the things you did not lose is a helpful way of coping with sadness and loss. Your child may need help because some things can be hard to name or draw (e.g., loss of a sense of safety). When your child is finished, discuss some positive things he or she can do to feel better. Adding fun activities to your daily routine (see Page 18) may also help.





## Coping With Sadness And Loss

Many people feel sad or "blue" after an earthquake. They may feel this way because they lost things in the disaster. In the space below, write down or draw a picture of some of the things you lost because of the earthquake. Some things may not be easy to name and may not be something that you can see or touch, such as you do not "feel safe" anymore. Write these down, too.

1. Write about or draw a picture of some of the things you lost because of the earthquake. (If you lost nothing, draw or write about things other people lost.)

2. What are some of the things you did not lose because of the earthquake? Draw or write about some of the things you still have. For example, you can write: "I may have lost some things because of the earthquake, but I still have...."



## Staying Safe After An Earthquake

Danger from an earthquake doesn't end when the earth stops moving. In fact, many injuries occur after an earthquake has passed. Aftershocks after the initial earthquake can also cause damage and hamper recovery or rebuilding efforts.

Children, in particular, are at a high risk of getting injured after an earthquake. With debris covering up holes and other hazards, fallen trees and power lines, dangerous debris scattered on the ground, wild animals and scared pets wandering around, and a number of other potentially harmful situations, children can easily get hurt.

While accidents can happen, the risk of serious injury may be greatly reduced with just a few simple actions. Here are some ideas:

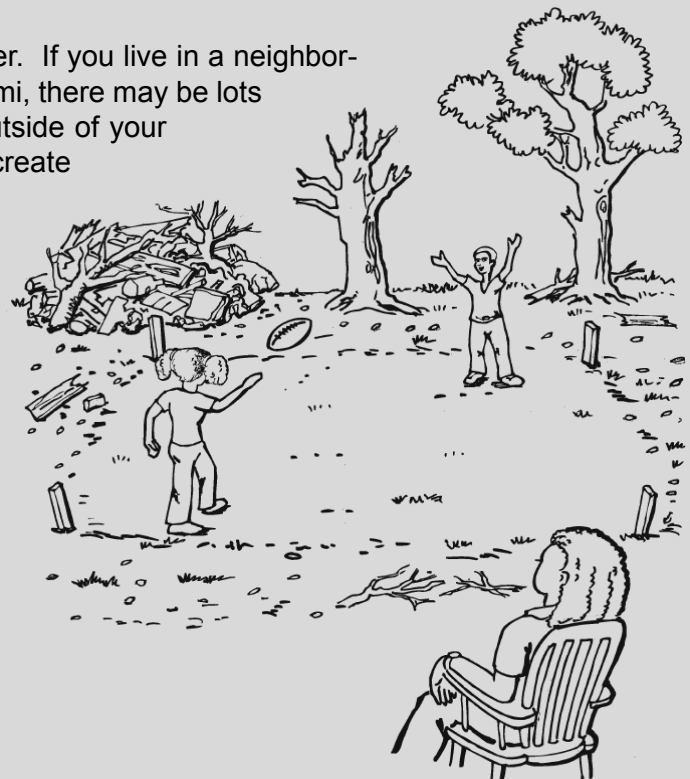
1. Talk to your child about the dangers he or she may face after an earthquake (review the common hazards listed on the next page with your child).
2. Clear your house of any potential dangers before letting your child inside (e.g., test all balcony railings and electrical outlets, remove leaking chemicals, clean up broken glass, etc.).
3. Locate and clear "safe areas" where your child can play outside. (See Adult Activity below).
4. Make sure a responsible adult is supervising your child at all times.
5. Never let your child play outside after dark.

For more information on keeping safe after a disaster, check out the "Prevent Injury After A Disaster" fact sheet on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website at: [www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/injury/facts.asp](http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/injury/facts.asp).

### Adult Activity: Create A "Safe Zone" For Your Child

Children are often eager to play outside after a disaster. If you live in a neighborhood that was affected by an earthquake and/or tsunami, there may be lots of dangerous debris and other hazards around the outside of your home. To protect your child from injury, it will help to create a "safe zone" where he or she can play safely.

Choose a small area suitable for your child to play in. Make sure there are no power lines, dangerous objects or debris nearby. Go through the area carefully and remove any debris that could hurt your child (such as nails, pieces of glass, etc.). Then, mark the edges of the play area with brightly colored ribbons or other visible markers. Before letting your child play, walk your child through the play area and its boundaries. Always be sure to have an adult supervise your child at all times.





## Staying Safe After An Earthquake

Big earthquakes can cause a lot of damage. While people can get hurt during an earthquake, many people also get hurt after an earthquake is over because of all the damage that was caused. You have to be very careful after an earthquake so that you don't get hurt. Here are some ways you can stay safe.

### Do's And Don'ts For Staying Safe After A Earthquake

#### DO:

- Watch where you walk, sit, and place your hands. You could trip on debris or cut yourself on broken glass or other sharp objects.
- Be careful when crossing streets. Cars may not stop like they normally would.
- Stay out of debris piles, abandoned homes, and damaged buildings.
- Drink only bottled water until your tap water is safe to drink.

#### DON'T:

- Touch any fallen power lines or anything touching a power line.
- Play in floodwaters or puddles. The water may be contaminated with chemicals and raw sewage or could give you an electric shock.
- Touch any wild animals or stray pets. They may be scared or hurt and could bite.
- Play outside after dark.

In the picture below, circle all the things that can hurt you. Remember to stay away from these things if you see them after an earthquake.



## Some Common Questions And Answers

### **My child is worried about another earthquake. What should I say?**

Aftershocks are common after a major earthquake, which can make it more difficult for people to cope with the disaster. Children often are comforted by hearing that family members love them and will do everything they can to keep them safe. You should be honest with your child about the prospects of another earthquake, but also be reassuring. Tell your child something like this:

*“Being scared of another earthquake is normal. Many people are nervous because another earthquake may happen. However, everyone is working very hard to keep you, your family, and your friends safe. Seismologists at the National Earthquake Information Center and people at the fire and police departments are all working together to help people stay informed and safe.”*

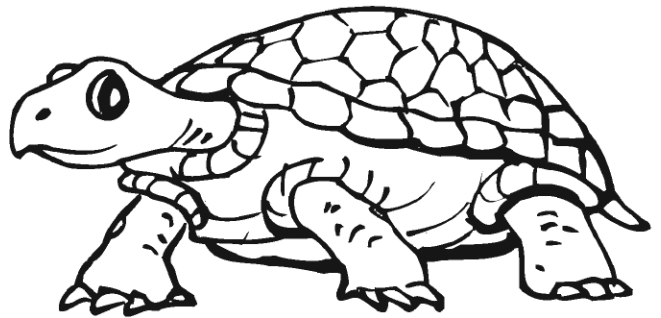
(Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists)

### **How can I teach my child to relax?**

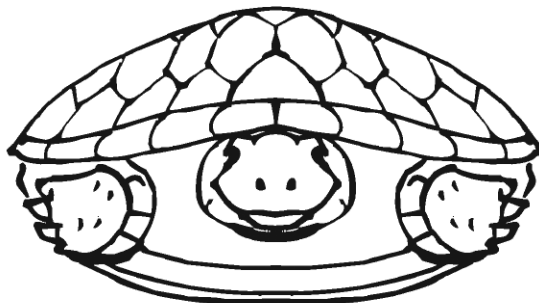
**Use the Turtle Technique:** Talk to your child about what turtles do when they feel scared. Tell your child that turtles go into their shells to calm down. Say that he or she can also create a shell to relax in when feeling mad, scared, or stressed. Your child can create a shell by doing any of the following: putting his or her head down, going to a quiet corner or a separate room, or just closing his or her eyes.

Once your child is in his or her shell, it is important to relax. Here are some things that can help:

- 1) Sit in a comfortable position, with feet flat on the floor.
- 2) Take a couple of deep breaths; feel your stomach go in and out like a balloon.
- 3) Count to 10 or 20 very slowly.
- 4) Imagine something you really enjoy, such as sitting on the beach in the sun, floating on water, or some other calm image.
- 5) Remind your child that he or she can practice this before going to sleep or when nervous or scared.



Note: It's also important for parents to relax! Try to “take a break” from feeling tense and worried, by doing the turtle activity with your child. Or, find a quiet place - even if it's only for a few minutes each day - and follow the breathing and relaxation instructions above.



### **My family had to move because of the earthquake. How can I help my child?**

The same coping strategies that help most children after a traumatic event (see Pages 18-25) can be used to assist children who move because of a disaster. Here are some additional helpful tips:

- Enroll your child in school as soon as possible, so that they don't miss out on important learning activities. School attendance also helps to normalize children's daily routine, provides an opportunity for making new friends, and occupies children with productive activities. If your child enrolls in a new school, ask the teacher to assign a "big brother or sister" in the classroom to help your child's transition to this new setting.
- Children miss their friends. If you have contact information for "friends from home," encourage your child to Email, call or write them. If contact information is not available, suggest that your child keep a diary or take pictures to share with their friends when they see them next.
- Try to make the best of a difficult situation. Treat the relocation as an "adventure." Have your child keep a "travel log" or journal. They can name their journal "My Adventures Since The Earthquake." Your child could keep track of daily activities, draw pictures, or insert photos to capture the adventure for future storytelling.
- Try to do one fun family activity each day, even if it is just for 15 minutes. This will provide a needed distraction from the challenges everyone in the family is facing.

### **How can I tell when to seek professional help for my child?**

It is a good idea to seek the help of a mental health professional when either:

- Your child has a number of stress reactions (see Page 12) that don't seem to be getting better or going away after a few months.

OR

• ➤ Your child is so bothered by the earthquake or related events that he or she is having a very hard time in school, at home, or with friends.

\* This advice applies to adults as well. If your stress reactions persist or interfere with your everyday functioning, you should seek professional help.

### **Where can I obtain professional help for my child or another family member?**

If you or your child needs emergency help right away, call 9-1-1 or check the government listings of your local phone book for "mental health crisis hotlines." The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number is 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

For non-emergencies, you can find a psychologist via the American Psychological Association's website at <http://locator.apa.org/> or contact 2-1-1 for a referral. If the 2-1-1 service is not available in your area, try contacting your local mental health association or ask your child's doctor for a referral.

## Some Helpful Websites

### **U.S. Geological Survey - Earthquake Hazards Program (official website)**

Information on current and past earthquakes, earthquake science and research, and much more.

<http://earthquake.usgs.gov/>

### **FEMA – What To Do Before An Earthquake**

Brief tips on how families can reduce serious injury or loss of life from an earthquake

[http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/eq\\_before.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/hazard/earthquake/eq_before.shtm)

### **Geology.com – Earthquakes**

Excellent website with information on current and past earthquakes, how earthquakes form, and information for teachers to use in the classroom.

<http://geology.com/earthquakes/>

### **Geology.com – Tsunami**

Excellent website about tsunamis, including current news and historical information.

<http://geology.com/tsunami/>

### **National Association of School Psychologists: Helping Children After A Natural Disaster**

Information for parents and teachers on children's reactions to disasters and how to address them.

[www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis\\_safety/naturaldisaster\\_ho.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/naturaldisaster_ho.aspx)

### **National Child Traumatic Stress Network - Earthquakes**

Information on how to assist children who have been through an earthquake.

[www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/natural-disasters/earthquakes](http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/natural-disasters/earthquakes)

### **National Institute of Mental Health – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

Excellent website that includes general information on PTSD, signs and symptoms, treatment and where to get help.

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml).

## Resources

1. La Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. S., Vernberg, E. M., & Roberts, M. C. (2002). Helping Children Cope with Disasters and Terrorism. Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.
2. La Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. S., Lai, B., & Jaccard, J. (2010) Hurricane-related exposure experiences and stressors, other life events, and social support: Concurrent and prospective impact on children's persistent post-traumatic stress symptoms. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 78, 794-805.
3. La Greca, A.M., & Silverman, W.S. (2011, in press). Children and disasters and terrorism. In P. Kendall (Ed.), *Child and adolescent therapy: Cognitive-behavioral procedures* (4th Ed). New York: Guilford Press.
4. La Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. S., Vernberg, E. M., & Prinstein, M. J. (1996). Post-traumatic stress symptoms in children after Hurricane Andrew: A prospective study. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 64, 712-723.
5. La Greca, A. M., Vernberg, E. M., Silverman, W. K., Vogel, A. L., & Prinstein, M. J. (1994). Helping children prepare for and cope with natural disasters: A manual for professionals working with elementary school children. Miami, FL. (third printing, September, 1996).