AFTER THE STORM

A GUIDE TO HELP CHILDREN COPE WITH
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF A HURRICANE

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This book was created for the parents and children affected by the deadly hurricane season of 2004 by Annette La Greca (www.psy.miami/faculty/alagreca) and Scott Sevin and Elaine Sevin of 7-Dippity, Inc., who donated their time and services. For information about 7-Dippity, Inc., please go to www.7-dippity.com.

This book is dedicated to Max Mayfield, Ed Rappaport, Miles Lawrence, Richard Pasch, Lixion Avila, Jack Beven, James Franklin and all current and former forecasters and staff at the National Hurricane Center 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 a hurricane may last only hours, its effects can last for months or even years. In the aftermath of a hurricane, many parents and caregivers express concerns about how the hurricane and events related to it 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 adults address these questions.

Children and adults' reactions to a hurricane will vary depending in part on how much they were directly affected by the storm. Because of this, some 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 work on with a child. In addition, please 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 with a child.

This book contains activities that parents and other 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. Keep in mind that some children prefer to seek out more information than others.

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 a parallel activity for the child -

There are five sections in this book which have been put together in a suggested sequence. However, feel free to "skip ahead" to those that may be especially useful for your child. The first section, Topics 1-2, contains activities that may help you "ease into" the book. The second section, Topics 3-5, will help you understand a child's reactions to a hurricane. The third section, Topics 6-9, covers coping skills that should be helpful for most children. The fourth section, Topics 10-14, focuses on coping skills to help children with specific situations. The fifth section contains information on creating a family disaster plan (Topic 15), answers to some common questions and additional useful information and resources.

Find a quiet time to complete the activities. Explain to the 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 hurricane.

With our best wishes,

Annette La Greca Elaine Sevin Scott Sevin

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Understanding Hurricanes – What Is A Hurricane?

Living through a hurricane can be a scary event for children and adults. In the aftermath of a storm, it is important that both physical and psychological needs are attended to. Because hurricanes are relatively rare (they usually do not strike a given area often), your child may not have previously experienced a hurricane or may not fully understand what a hurricane is, even if he or she 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 hurricanes and events related to a hurricane strike in order to help them cope with their reactions and feelings to a storm and its aftermath.

This section will help you assist your child in understanding hurricanes, their experiences during a storm and what has happened to them, their family, friends and community as a result of a hurricane strike. It will also help to clear up misunderstandings your child may have about a storm or the events surrounding it.

WHAT IS A HURRICANE?

A hurricane is a large, organized weather system that forms over warm ocean water. Hurricanes have a pronounced circulation around a calm center with sustained surface winds of 74 mph or more. Hurricanes, also called typhoons or cyclones in other parts of the world, generally form in the summer months, when the oceans are at their warmest. The Atlantic hurricane season begins June 1 and ends November 30.

Official NOAA photo

JOINT ACTIVITY: Hurricane Vocabulary

Meteorological or "weather" terms can be confusing to adults as well as children. It will help if your child understands some hurricane-related terms that may be prominent in the media. Below is a list of keywords that you and your child can discuss. Keep in mind that some children may not want to discuss every word. You can read these terms to your child and have him or her choose which ones they would like to talk or know more about. If necessary, look up information on the Internet or at a library.

Tropical Wave	Storm Surge	National Hurricane Center (NHC)
Tropical Depression	Eye (of a hurricane)	Max Mayfield, NHC Director
Tropical Storm	Eye Wall	NOAA
Hurricane	Low/High Pressure	FEMA
Saffir-Simpson Scale	Atlantic Ocean	Hurricane Watch/Warning
(Category 1-5 Hurricane)	Caribbean Sea	Tropical Storm Watch/Warning
Sustained Wind Speed	Gulf of Mexico	Evacuation
Counterclockwise	Cape Verde Islands	Storm Shelter
Tornado	Leeward/Windward Islands	Forecast Models

What Is A Hurricane?

A hurricane is a large weather system that forms over warm ocean waters. Hurricanes have strong winds (74 mph or more) and thunderstorms that spin or move around a calm center, known as an eye. The word "hurricane" comes from the early Spanish and Indians who thought the "big winds" were sent by evil spirits to hurt them. Over the years, we learned that hurricanes are actually a force of nature that people cannot control.

Hurricane Ivan, 9/15/04

Photo: Official NOAA photo (National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration).

People who have been through a hurricane say there is a lot of wind and rain in the storm. Sometimes the wind can get very loud. What was the hurricane like when you went through it? Below, draw or write about what you saw or heard during the storm. Use another sheet of paper if you need more room. *If you did not go through the hurricane, draw or write about what you think it was like to be in the storm when it hit your neighborhood.

Understanding Hurricanes – What Happened?

The landfall of a hurricane, especially an intense hurricane, typically marks a defining moment in the lives of those affected by the storm. Memories of a hurricane often stay with people for the rest of their lives. For children, however, the significance of such an event may not be immediately understood or their memories of the experience may become distorted or may fade with time. It is helpful for them to remember the events of a hurricane and their own personal experiences. The activities in this section will help you and your child reflect on the storm and what has occurred since.

One way to help a child cope with a hurricane – and assist in preventing any misunderstandings – is to review what happened before, during and after a storm. When your child is finished working on the activities on Pages 5 and 7, go over his or her responses and talk about the storm. If your child has any incorrect information, help correct those misunderstandings.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Create A Time Line

With your child, create a time line highlighting important facts and events surrounding the hurricane that hit your area. Begin your time line by tracking the origin and history of the storm. List significant impacts the hurricane has had on your family and community, and keep track of the recovery efforts. When you are finished, you can place the time line in a scrapbook (see below).

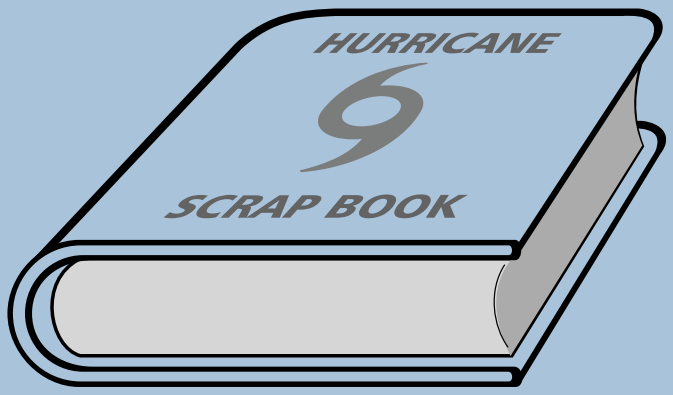
Example:

Date	Highlight
8AM, September 21, 2004	Hurricane Warning issued for our area. Evacuations ordered.
9:30AM, October 4, 2004	Schools reopen in our county.

Note: Older children may be more interested in exact figures (e.g., storm intensity, track and landfall locations) while younger children may be interested in more general information (storm category, general path and countries/states hit). Go to www.nhc.noaa.gov/pastall.shtml for historical storm information.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Hurricane Scrapbook

Together, create a scrapbook of your family's personal memories of the hurricane. Inside, include pictures of your family and your neighborhood taken before and after the storm. Add newspaper, magazine and Internet articles, photographs and other information related to the hurricane to your scrapbook as well. And don't forget to include a section where you can add your child's answers to the activities in this book. Store your scrapbook in a cool, dry place away from sunlight. Who knows, one day your grandchildren will be able to read it!



Understanding What Happened

Being in a hurricane is something that many people never forget. In the future, your children may read about the storm that you just went through. The National Weather Service keeps records (also called archives) of hurricanes and tropical storms that form in the Atlantic Ocean. The records include information on each storm, including its track (where the storm went) and strength (how strong the storm was). When a storm hits land, additional information is collected, such as rainfall amounts, storm surge amounts and more. This information is important because it helps scientists better understand and predict hurricanes. It also helps people build better and safer buildings.

Assignment: Hurricane Detective

You are a meteorologist working for the National Weather Service. A meteorologist is a scientist who studies the weather. Part of your job is to keep records about the weather in your area. Usually, computers keep track of the weather for you. However, when the hurricane hit your town, the computers stopped working and did not record the weather that day. The National Weather Service has asked you to fill in the missing information. Do some research and fill out the form below as best you can. Good luck!

Date:_____
The day the hurricane hit your town

Meteorologist:_____
Your name

Location:_____
Town where you live

Hurricane: _____
Name of hurricane

Time of Landfall:_____
Time when the eye first came ashore

Area of Landfall:_____
Where the eye first came ashore

Category: _____
Category on Saffir-Simpson Scale

Storm Direction:_____
In which direction it was moving

Storm Speed:_____
How fast the storm was moving

Sustained Wind Speed: _____**mph**
Highest sustained winds in your area

Peak Wind Gust:_____**mph**
Highest wind gust in your area

Rainfall Amount:_____**inches**
Amount of rain that fell in your area

Storm Surge:_____**feet**
How high the water got when the eye came ashore

Observations (*describe the weather on the day the hurricane hit***). Use another sheet of paper if you need more room:** _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Understanding How Your Child Feels

Hurricanes, like other natural disasters and traumatic events, affect people in different ways. Life history, personality, age and a person's experiences during and after a storm all play a role in shaping a person's response to a hurricane. Because some people will be more affected than others, reactions to a storm may differ greatly from individual to individual.

For many children and adults, a distressing event such as a hurricane can bring about strong feelings and mixed emotions. As time passes, their feelings about the hurricane may change. This is normal for those who experience a natural disaster or other distressing event. Keep in mind that there may be days and times when you may feel better than others.

The Importance of Asking Children How They Are Feeling

Research conducted after Hurricane Andrew reveals that parents and other caregivers are sometimes surprised to learn the extent to which a child was distressed by a storm. There can be many reasons for this. In a study by La Greca and colleagues (see Resources on Page 41), children mentioned that they were hesitant to tell their parents or other adults about their feelings because they noticed that the adults were already upset and didn't want to upset them further. This shows why it is important for adults to talk directly with their children about their thoughts and feelings.

The activities in this section will help you understand how you and your child are feeling about the hurricane or its aftermath. They will also assist you in talking 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?

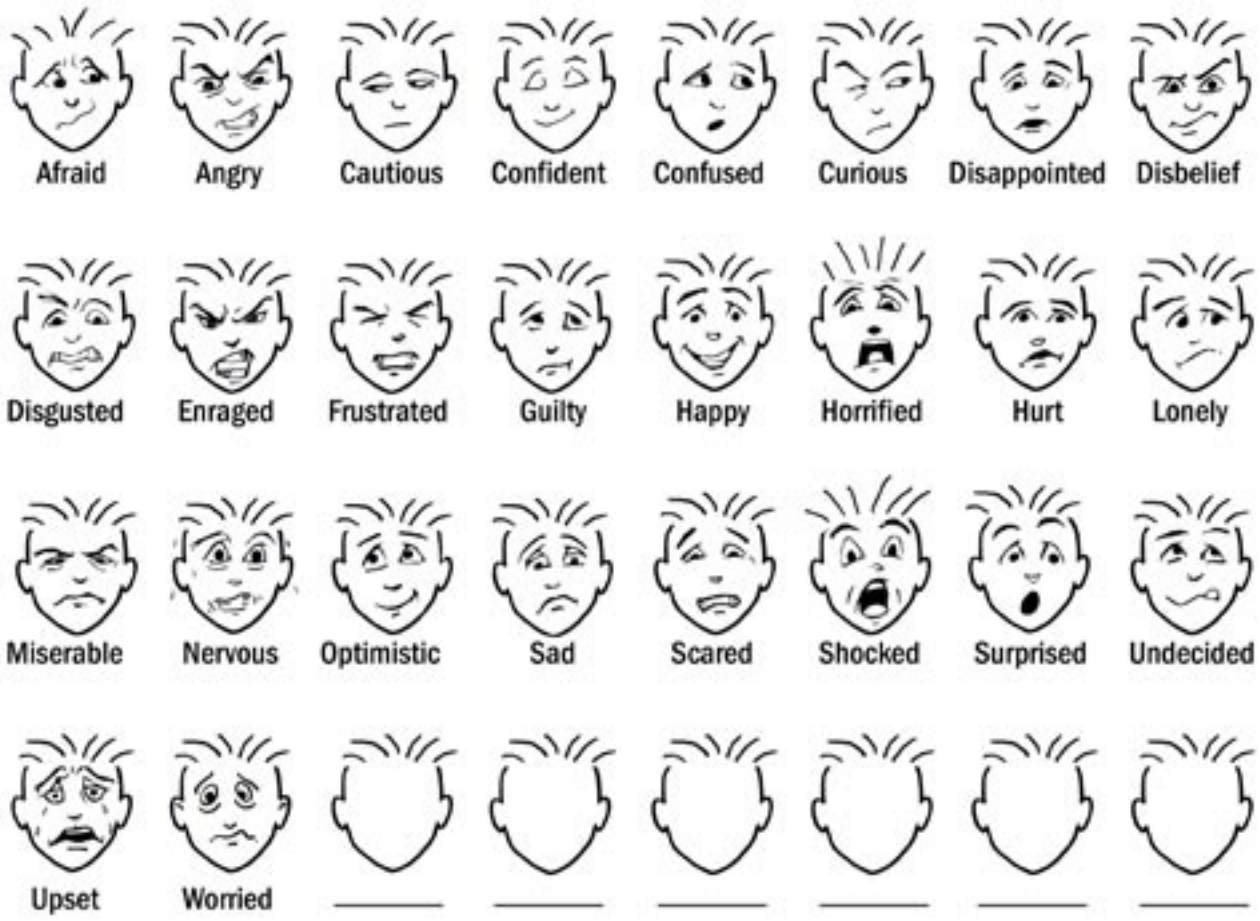
How do you feel about the hurricane? Write your feelings in the columns below. How have your feelings changed since the storm first struck? What has stayed the same? If there are any strong emotions you still have that you feel uncomfortable with, such as extreme anger or an overwhelming sadness, it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

How I felt after the hurricane first hit	How I feel now
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

How I Feel About The Hurricane

When a hurricane hits, people react in different ways and have many different types of feelings. Some of those feelings may change or go away after a few days or weeks. Complete the activities below to show how you have been feeling about the hurricane that hit your area.

1. Below are pictures and words that describe how some people feel after a hurricane. Circle the faces or create new ones to best describe how you felt after the storm first ended.



2. Below, draw or write about how you feel now about the hurricane. You can use the words or pictures from above to help describe your feelings.

Tips For Talking About Feelings With A Child

Over the next few weeks and months, there are likely to be more developments related to the hurricane as your family and community clean up and recover from it. In order to understand how your child is reacting to these events, it will be important to keep the "lines of communication" open. This means creating a comfortable time and place for your child to talk with you about feelings or worries. It will help if you 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 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 hurricane, other times he or she may focus on other everyday events. Either way, the guidelines on this page will help you identify how your child is feeling and the focus of their worries. Remember to speak with another adult before speaking with your child if you feel you are having trouble with your own feelings.

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."

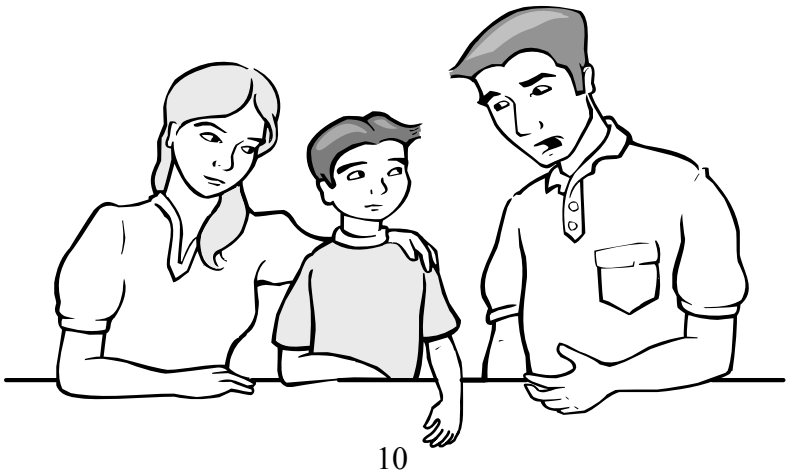
- Be neutral. Do not judge or criticize your child. Make comments like these:
  "That's interesting."
  "Tell me more about it."
  "What do you mean?"

- 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 these:
  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 has shown that children with greater emotional support after natural disasters report less distress (see Resources on Page 41).



How I Feel About Things In Everyday Life

How do you feel about things in everyday life? Below are some sentences that are not finished. Fill in the words until it is a complete sentence. There are no right or wrong answers. Just complete the sentence with how you feel.

School

What I like most about school is _____

The thing that bothers me most about school is_____

My best friend

My best friend is_____, and I really like _____

My friend makes me mad when_____

My teacher

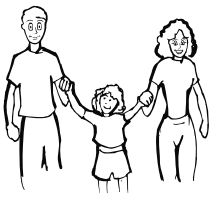
My teacher's name is_____, and my teacher is _____

I get mad at my teacher when _____

Holidays

My favorite holiday is _____

On that day, the thing I most enjoy is _____



Family

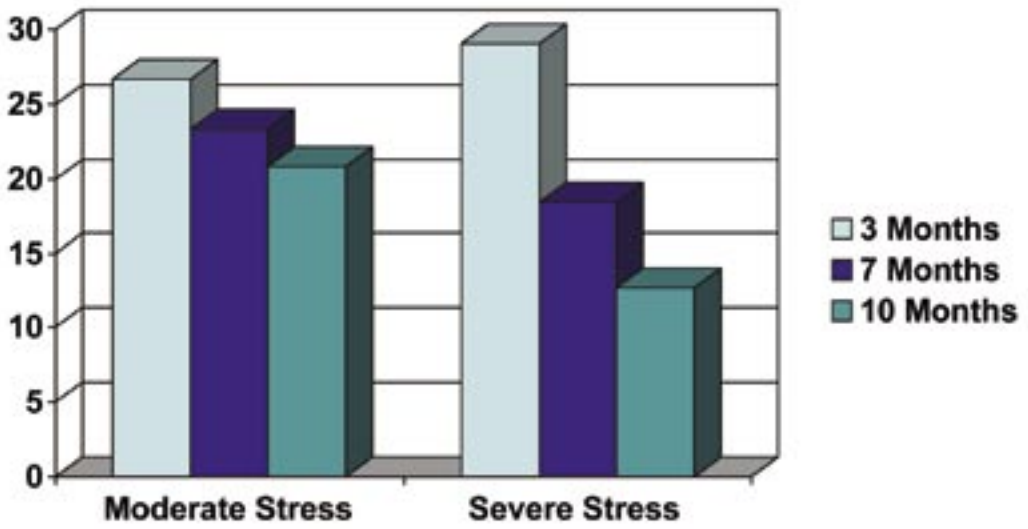
I like it when my family_____

It gets me upset when my family _____

Understanding Your Child's Stress Reactions

Feelings of anxiety, frustration, anger and fear are common reactions to a hurricane. Other reactions such as nightmares and difficulty sleeping are common as well. It is normal for children and adults to experience a variety of stress reactions after going through a traumatic event. In fact, thousands of people have reported suffering from stress reactions after previous hurricanes.

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. Usually stress reactions will lessen or go away after a few weeks.

Sometimes, however, reactions to a hurricane are more severe and can 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. While stress reactions are common after trauma, if they last longer than a couple of months or interfere with everyday activities, a person may be suffering from PTSD and will need professional assistance in dealing with them. For more information on PTSD, visit the National Institute of Mental Health's website at: www.nimh.nih.gov/healthinformation/ptsdmenu.cfm.

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 be used to help your child with that problem.

Questions circled	Possible Problems	Helpful Coping Sections
5 and 14	Fears and Worries	see Pages 8, 16, 20 and 28
1, 2, 3, 4 and 11	"Re-experiencing"	see Pages 8, 16, 20 and 32
6, 7, 8 and 13	Avoidance or Emotional Numbing	see Pages 8, 16, 28 and 36
9, 10, 12 and 15	Physical Symptoms	see Pages 16, 20, 22 and 32
16, 17 and 18	Other specific reactions	see Pages 18, 26, 34 and 36

C

How I Have Been Feeling

The sentences below ask about your thoughts and feelings on the hurricane 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.

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

(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 a hurricane or other distressing 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 a hurricane 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 a hurricane….

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

Before or after a hurricane…

- Have academic difficulties.
- Have experienced previous trauma.
- Have a history of behavioral or emotional problems (from before the storm).
- Have had other recent 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 storm (attend a new school, family had to move to a new home or town, etc.).

Keep in mind that if a child was experiencing stress prior to the hurricane, he or she will be particularly vulnerable to experiencing stress in the aftermath period. Also, if another hurricane or other distressing event occurs, many children and adults may re-experience some of their initial stress reactions. If you are unsure about how your child is feeling at some point in the future, you can repeat the activities in this section.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Keeping A Balance

One way to help children cope with the stress of a hurricane or other natural disaster is to build up the number of "resources" available for support. Use the balance beam below to help with this activity. On the left side, write down the "risks" or things causing stress for your child after the storm. 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. It may also include organizations such as a club, a Scout group or places like a YMCA or a house of worship. Try to get the "resources" to balance or outweigh the "risks."

Risks/Stressors:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Resources/Support:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Gauge Your Stress

A rain gauge is used to measure how much rain has fallen from a storm. Rainwater falling from a storm gets caught in the gauge, and begins to add up. The more the rain, the higher the number.

The "Stress Gauge" below is like a rain gauge except it measures feelings instead of water. How scared or upset are you because of the hurricane? Read the Stress Gauge first. Then, starting from the bottom, color in the stress gauge to the number that best describes how you are feeling. The number 1 means you feel very little stress. The number 10 means you feel a lot of stress and need some help.

I'm really, really scared and upset. I need help. — **HELP! Too much stress!**

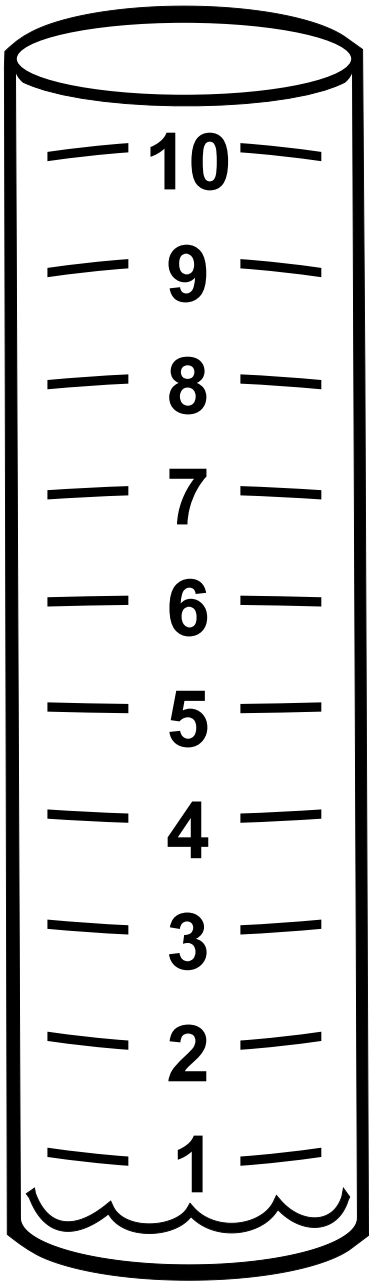
I'm very scared and upset. I need extra help to get through this. — **Very Much**

A Lot

I'm scared, but I'll be okay with a little help. — **Some**

I'm a little scared, but I'm okay. — **A Little Bit**

Nothing scares or bothers me. — **Not At All**



Understanding How Your Child Copes

People cope with their reactions to stressful events 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 as helpful and can actually cause more harm than good. Yelling, getting angry and blaming others are all examples of unhelpful ways of coping. These ways of coping can lead to new problems. Children who use ineffective ways of coping with stress tend to have more difficulty dealing with their reactions to traumatic events such as a hurricane. It is important to recognize when your child is doing something unhelpful and assist him or her in finding a better way to deal with things.

The questions on the next page will help your child reveal 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 when dealing with upsetting events related to hurricanes or other stressors. Although it may not always be clear as to what specific events are upsetting your child, it is always helpful 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 R&R/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
See a counselor/join a support group

Adult Activity: Identifying How Your Child Copes

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

Positive Ways My Child Copes	Negative Ways My Child Copes
_____	_____
_____	_____

Answer Key to Child Coping Test on Page 17

Items #3, 6, 9 and 12 are positive coping strategies that you can encourage your child to use. 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 better. Additional ideas for coping are covered in other sections of this book. "Seeking information" and "finding distraction" can also be effective 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 sometimes 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 items, try to help him or her focus on other ways of coping with stress. Again, some sections in this book will give you some good ideas.

How I Cope With Things That Happen

Here is a list of things that children do to solve problems or feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you have done to feel better about the hurricane or other things that have happened. Circle YES or NO for each of the sentences to show what you do to feel better about what has happened.

	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 others like 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

One of the most upsetting aspects of hurricanes and other natural 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 abruptly changed or disrupted, they can shake a person's feelings of safety and security.

When a hurricane strikes an area, especially a powerful one, everyday activities and routines may be disrupted for an extended period of time. Schools may close, power may be out and clean water may not be available for weeks or longer. Further, your child's friends may move away, or extracurricular activities your child may participate in, such as sports leagues or dance classes, may also be cancelled. To assist in coping with these disruptions, it will be helpful to keep your child in as normal a routine as possible during this period. Although this may be difficult, particularly if your area is hard-hit, try making arrangements with family and friends who can assist. If things are really bad, try establishing a temporary routine for your child until life gets back to normal. For example, have your child do certain chores at a given time each day, have a regular reading or study hour, and a regular time to exercise. Be creative and try to develop a plan that is similar to your child's normal routines as best you can.

This section is designed to help you and your child identify your "normal routines." Before working on the next page, photocopy the page and let your child complete their activities for both normal weekday and weekend routines, as the 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 that you monitor your own routines as well as your child's. 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. Break down your activities into the following time categories: Children, Home, Family (other than children), Friends, Work and Self. At the end of each week, calculate the total amount of time spent in each category.

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

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

JOINT ACTIVITY: Add Some Fun To Your Normal Routines

Together, review your child's routine list from Page 19. It may be the case that your child's routine has changed since before the hurricane – this is okay. Have your child highlight or mark with a star his or her favorite everyday 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 to both of your normal routines that you will enjoy doing together. Also, try to make time for your child to see his or her friends, as friends are an important source of social support.

My Normal Routines

What is your normal routine? 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 the listed activity.

What I normally do

In the morning:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

In the afternoon:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

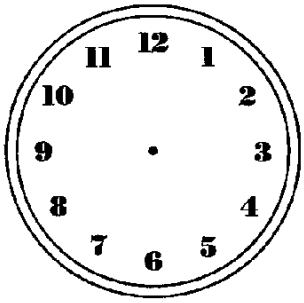
In the evening:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

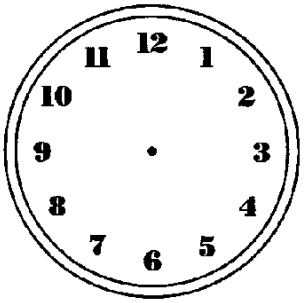
Before bedtime:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

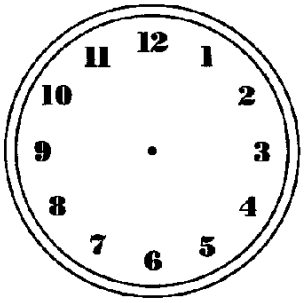
Complete the clocks



What time I normally wake up.



What time I normally eat lunch.



What time I normally go to bed.

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

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Things That Can Help – Reducing Exposure

Another way to help children cope with a hurricane is by reducing their exposure to upsetting images that may "remind" them of a storm. Children who are exposed to upsetting images of a traumatic event typically report more distress than children who are not exposed to such images. This is because visual images are ways of "re-experiencing" a traumatic event. These disturbing reminders can lead to reactions such as increased fears, bad dreams and trouble sleeping. Try to help your child avoid images of hurricanes, storm-related damage or other disasters.

Because television images can be disturbing, your child will feel better if you limit his or her viewing of hurricane-related programs on TV. This will be particularly helpful if another storm approaches your area. Television programs to limit include the news or special programs about hurricanes or families who were hurt by such storms. These types of programs may be most prominent on TV if or when another storm approaches your area, at the beginning or end of a hurricane season or around the anniversary of a hurricane strike.

Prepare vs. Scare

Many news stations report on hurricanes and other natural disasters in a dramatic and sometimes scary way, to make sure that people prepare. However, once you and your family have the information you need (e.g., updates from the National Hurricane Center, which are delivered once every few hours), turn the television off! Too much viewing will scare, rather than prepare.

Adult Activity: Develop Your Own Television Viewing Guide

Develop a plan to promote positive viewing habits. This will help limit your child's exposure to upsetting images of hurricanes or other distressing events. Follow these rules:

LIMIT – the amount of time your child watches television. Set a prechosen period your child can watch television each day. Turn the television off when the time is up. Try to limit your own viewing as well to set a good example.

PLAN – with your child, in advance, what he or she will watch. Use a TV Guide or newspaper to help your child decide. Don't let your child flip channels, even during commercials. If you are unsure of a program's rating, go to http://tv.yahoo.com or www.mediafamily.org for a ratings guide.

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

ENCOURAGE – your child to participate in other fun activities like reading, sports or other 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

Before or after a hurricane strikes, the media will be focused on events related to the storm. While it is important to stay informed as to what is happening, spending too much time watching storm information on TV may not be helpful. It can add to already heightened stress levels. You have to find a balance. If your area is under a hurricane watch or warning, make sure your family makes the necessary preparations. Involve your child in "getting ready." However, once the preparations are complete, do something fun as a distraction. If possible, do something outside such as playing catch, riding bikes or taking a walk. You can also play cards, games or watch movies with your child. 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 To Do

Fill in the blanks. Tell how many days a week you do each activity listed.

ACTIVITY	DAYS PER WEEK
Watch TV	_____
Listen to music	_____
Play with friends	_____
Do family activities	_____
Read a book	_____
Play videogames	_____
Play sports	_____

List your favorites for each category:

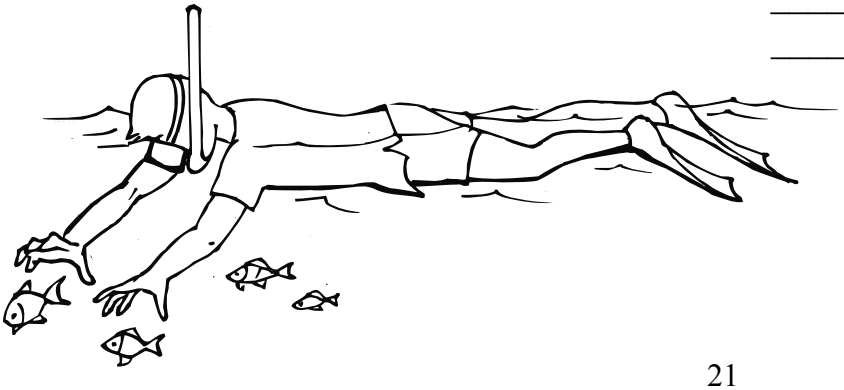
My favorite hobbies are: _____
_____
_____

My favorite sports are: _____
_____
_____

My favorite family activities are: _____
_____
_____

My favorite musicians are: _____
_____
_____

My favorite books are: _____
_____
_____



Things That Can Help – Staying Physically Healthy

Stress can affect people physically as well as mentally. After a distressing 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 everyday activities, it is also important to stay active and healthy. This is especially true for children. A child who is healthy and physically fit will find it easier to cope with stress. In fact, all of us do better when we 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 are also designed to help 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 aspects of your child's health behaviors that are a problem or that have changed recently. Write down any problems or changes you have noticed in the following categories:

Eating meals:	**Sleeping or resting:**
Exercise:	**Increased complaints:**

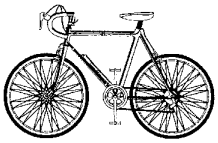
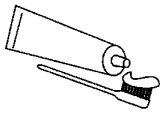
JOINT ACTIVITY: Coping Chart

Take a look at the physical changes you have noticed in your child. If there are areas that 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 some of your child's answers from the next page. Some examples are:

Eating (lack of appetite):	**Trouble falling or staying asleep:**
Drink a milkshake with fruit Take vitamins Have a regular family mealtime Purchase healthy snacks (raisins, carrots)	Sleep with a light or night-light on Snuggle with a favorite doll Play soft music Count backward from 100
Exercise (lack of):	**Increased physical complaints:**
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.)	Have child checked by family doctor Practice a relaxation exercise to reduce stress

How I Stay Healthy

By keeping healthy, you can deal better with the things that make you stressed or worried. 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 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 the virtues of compassion, volunteering and doing good deeds.

Helping can be done in many ways and forms. 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 their 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. Research different community-service and charitable organizations in your community and choose several that interest you. Then, give them a call. Most organizations would love to have assistance and should be able to work around your schedule. Try to 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 a hurricane, volunteer to assist them with chores, errands or babysitting. Many residents affected by hurricanes cannot afford, or are unable, to repair or rebuild their homes. You can assist by volunteering to repair damages or to help clean up storm debris. Consider volunteering at your child's school as well.

To find out about some local volunteer opportunities in your community,
dial **2-1-1,** go to **www.volunteersolutions.org** or contact your local United Way.

DONATING

You and your child can also help by donating to a local charity or hurricane relief drive. Children can donate items such as toys, clothes, dolls, books and other items. Adults can assist by donating money, goods or services. Your business can even 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 hurricane survivors to find out how you may best be able to assist. The needs of families may change over time, but many will continue to need support.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Participate In A Cleanup

After a hurricane, even the environment may need assistance in recovering from a storm. While hurricanes are a natural occurrence, man-made debris entering the environment is not. Plastic, glass, roofing material and other storm 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. The Officer Snook Water Pollution Program can assist you in organizing a cleanup. Contact the Officer Snook Program at (305) 672-7675 or by email at: officersnook@aol.com.

Helping Others In Your Community

Many people like to help others in their community. Perhaps you would like to help as well. There are many ways you can help. You can open a door for somebody, complete an extra chore at home or volunteer to help a teacher. You can even join a service club and participate in community-service projects.

How can you help?

Below, list things you can do to help at home, in your school and in your community. 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 normal routines.

HOME	SCHOOL	COMMUNITY

Thanking Those Who Help

Some people help others every day. Below, draw or list some of the people in your community who help others (such as police officers, firefighters or school counselors). When you are finished, choose one or two people from your list and write a letter thanking them for helping you and others in your community. You can even mail your letter if you wish.

Coping With Changes

A hurricane can be a life-changing event. The powerful storms have the ability to alter landscapes, as well as the lives of people in their path. Those who live through a hurricane or other traumatic event commonly experience changes. For some, changes may be dramatic, such as a change in their 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). Others may experience more subtle changes, such as a change in the way they feel about something (e.g., they no longer feel the same way about their neighborhood). Still, some people may experience little or no change.

How you cope with any changes, and your attitude toward them, will ultimately determine how changes impact 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 hurricane. For each change that you identify, try to think of a coping strategy to help you better deal with that change.

Adult Activity: Changes Since The Storm

Like others who have faced hurricanes, you and your child are coping with the aftermath of a storm. Some people may feel that they were not as impacted by the hurricane or events surrounding the storm. For others, the hurricane may have brought about significant changes. What changes, if any, has the hurricane 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 hurricane. Have these changes been for the better or for the worse? How have you coped with these changes? Remember, you can have a change 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 Hurricane Andrew, building codes were made stricter in Miami-Dade County so that safer buildings would be built – saving more lives in future hurricanes. This is an example of a positive change that can come out of a tragedy. While it may be difficult to find positive outcomes from a disaster, looking at the positives can help keep a disaster in perspective, and help you and your child cope with changes and any feelings of sadness and loss.

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

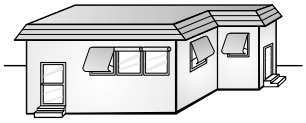
Changes Since The Hurricane

Hurricanes are powerful storms that can change a lot of things. Hurricanes can change the land around you. For example, hurricanes can blow down trees, create new inlets, erode beaches and wash away islands. Hurricanes can also change how and where people live. For example, a hurricane may damage or destroy a home and force the family that was living there to move somewhere else. Sometimes hurricanes can change the way people think or feel about something. For example, a person whose home was flooded by a hurricane may not feel like living in that home anymore.

What changes has the hurricane had on you? Below, write down changes the hurricane 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 hurricane hit).

CHANGES CAUSED BY THE HURRICANE:

Changes at home



Changes at school

Changes in my neighborhood

Changes in how I feel about things

Other changes the hurricane caused

Coping With Fears And Worries – Identifying Fears And Worries

After experiencing a traumatic event, children and adults often feel more worried and fearful. This can be especially true after a natural disaster that causes a lot of damage and disrupts lives, such as a hurricane. Hurricanes can bring about a whole new set of fears and anxieties for people that may not have been present before. They can also increase fears that already exist. For example, after a hurricane strikes an area, it is common for children and adults to have heightened fears and worries about their personal safety, the safety of loved ones or of future hurricanes.

In general, fears and worries are normal. However, if they interfere with your child's activities (e.g., keep them from going to school or playing with friends), then your child will need more help in coping with them. In order for you to be able to help your child cope with his or her worries, you must understand the kinds of things your child worries about. This section is designed to help you and your child identify and cope with some of your fears and worries.

Keep in mind that although your child may express fears related to a hurricane, he or she may be worried, or even more concerned, about things unrelated to the storm. Also, since worries can be learned through media sources such as television, we have included a section to help reduce media use (see Page 20). You might also find a relaxation exercise helpful (see Page 40). Since the focus of your child's worries may change, 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 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 troubled or 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.

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

Coping With Fears and Worries – Lessening Fears And 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). List people in school (e.g., school counselor, teacher), at home (e.g., parent or older sibling) 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 to 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 anxious 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 or master that worry. For example, if your child is worried about being late for the school bus, try to think of ways to help your child cope with this worry. You can wake your child up earlier or save time by having them pick out their clothes and deciding what they want for breakfast the night before. These simple solutions will help your child to feel better about being on time for the bus. See the activity below for creating "worry flash cards."

JOINT ACTIVITY – Worry Flash Cards

Developing a coping plan for each fear or worry can be a fun activity. Obtain some blank notecards. On one side, have your child write down a fear or worry that is particularly bothersome (see Child Activity on page 29). Then, together, think of positive things your child can do or think of to feel better. Write these positive solutions on the back of the card. Your child can memorize the cards or carry copies with them. See the example below.

Front (Worry):	Back (Solutions):
Another hurricane will hit	Limit viewing of TV coverage about hurricanes
	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 a parent or other 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 two adults at home, in your school and in your community 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 The Community: _____ _____

Another way to help you cope with your worries is to think of a solution to them. When you are "in control" of your worries, they may seem less upsetting. Choose five of the worries you listed on Page 29 and write them below. Then, think of ways that will help you feel better about that worry. For example, if you are worried about a bad test score, you can make extra time to study. When you are finished, show your answers to an adult and use them in creating Worry Flash Cards.

My WORRY	My SOLUTIONS
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.

Coping With Intrusive Thoughts And Dreams

Sometimes after a traumatic event, 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 a hurricane or might visualize trees falling or their house being flooded, even when they are in school or doing other activities. Sometimes these intrusive thoughts happen at bedtime and make it difficult for children to fall asleep or stay asleep.

Although these stress reactions are common, especially during the first few weeks or months after an upsetting event, the unwanted images may be very stressful. If your child is having these kinds of thoughts or images, or is having trouble sleeping, the activities in this section may be helpful.

One way to help stop intrusive thoughts is to encourage your child to redirect thinking away from the upsetting thoughts and focus on something more positive. If the intrusive 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

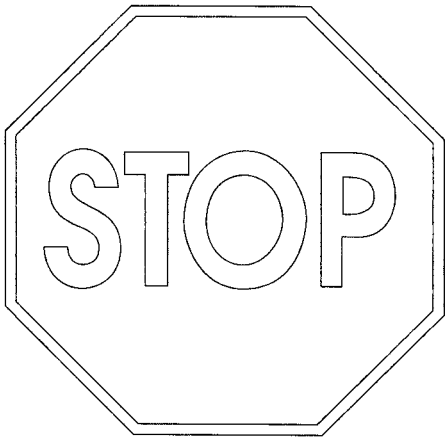
Ask your child if he or she has any thoughts about hurricanes, or if any "pictures" or "images" come into their head that bother them. If so, tell your child that this is very normal after something scary like a hurricane happens. Try and find out when these bad thoughts normally occur (e.g., at bedtime, 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 bothersome thoughts.

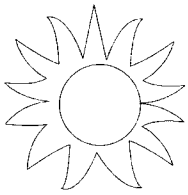
Together, complete the next page. You may want to photocopy the page before you work on it so your child will be able to carry a copy with them. On the top half of the page is a STOP sign. Let your child color it in. Below the sign is a space for you and your child to write down **OTHER** things your child can do when they start to have bothersome 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	NIGHTTIME or BEDTIME
Call a friend	Read a story
Call a parent	Listen to music
Read a book	Count backward from 100
Ride a bike	Practice relaxation (see page 33)
Hug a parent	Draw a picture
Sing or hum a song	Have a parent "tuck" you into bed

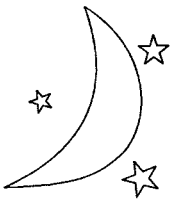
(Adapted from Robin Gurwitch, Ph.D., University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center)

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 also help to STOP what you are doing and think of a peaceful or happy place. Below, draw or write about a peaceful place that 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 or irritable feelings after a disaster, especially if they were personally affected by it. In fact, everybody feels more stressed after a hurricane, as life is more difficult. Disruptions caused by a hurricane may last for an extended period of time, which can add to already high levels of stress. While things may be frustrating, it is important to remember that many people are in a similar situation. You and your child must find positive ways to cope with any angry feelings you have.

Often, children may want to "blame others" for bad things that happened, or may just 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. Explain, however, 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 someone else or an animal.

The activities in this section will help your child manage angry feelings and resolve conflicts or disagreements 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 – At whom does your child get angry? What situations trigger the anger?

During – What does your child do when angry? What is their 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 the STOP, LOOK and LISTEN strategy or one of the other "positive" things he or she listed in the activity. Involve other family members as well.

Managing Angry Feelings

Some people may feel angry or upset after a hurricane. They may feel this way because a hurricane can cause a lot of damage and make life harder for them and their families. Below, write down the ways in which the hurricane made life harder for you (both at home and at school). Use another sheet of paper if you need more room.

Ex. My house lost power and I was very hot.

_____

_____

_____

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

Ex. My daddy can't go to work because of the hurricane.

_____

_____

_____

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. If you are upset or angry with someone, or get into an argument, it will help if you follow these simple steps:

Stop what you are doing and close your eyes.

Take three deep breaths very slowly.

Slowly count backward from 10 to 1.

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

On a separate sheet of paper, draw or write some good 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 hurricane, particularly for people who lost a loved one or a pet, whose way of life has changed significantly since before the storm or whose personal belongings were damaged or destroyed in the hurricane. Even if people did not lose anything in the storm, they may still feel sad. There are many reasons why people feel sad. Sometimes they feel badly for the people who lost their homes or businesses, they don't know what to do to help the situation or because things just "don't seem the same" since the hurricane.

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 persist for a long time or interfere with everyday functioning, 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 positive 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 sense of safety). When your child is finished, discuss some positive things your child can do to feel better.

Coping With Sadness And Loss

Many people feel sad or "blue" after a hurricane. They may feel this way because they lost things in the storm. In the space below, write down or draw a picture of some of the things you lost because of the hurricane. 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 or draw a picture of some of the things you lost because of the hurricane. (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 hurricane? 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 hurricane, but I still have…."

Family Disaster Plan

A disaster is a large-scale event that can cause great destruction and death. Some disasters are caused by forces of nature that cannot be controlled. These are known as natural disasters. A natural disaster can be caused by an event such as a hurricane, tornado, earthquake or flood. Some disasters are human-made, but can be just as destructive as a natural disaster, such as the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Many disasters happen with little or no warning. Having a family disaster plan can save the lives of you and your family, and may help your child cope with worries he or she may have about safety or getting separated during a disaster.

Create a family disaster plan. First, obtain information on how to prepare for disasters that may occur in your area. You can do this by contacting your local emergency management office or visit the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) website at: www.fema.gov/areyouready/. Once you have obtained this information, hold a family meeting and develop your family's disaster plan. Make sure that everyone knows ***what to do***, ***where to go*** and ***whom to call*** in the event a disaster occurs. Practice or review your plan every six months, or at the beginning of each hurricane season.

When creating your plan, identify hurricane evacuation routes and places your family can go to in the event you are told to evacuate, such as a public shelter or a friend's or relative's house. Keep in mind that sometimes it is better to move only a few miles inland than to evacuate to another city or county farther away. Also, choose a responsible out-of-state relative or friend as a point of contact for your family in case you get separated. Make sure everyone knows at least two ways to contact that person (e.g., telephone, mailing address). And don't forget to plan for your pets as well. If you evacuate to a public shelter, you may not be able to bring your pets.

Create a disaster supply kit. Store these items in a dry, accessible place. Make sure you have enough supplies to last at least seven days. For a checklist of hurricane supplies, visit the National Hurricane Center's website at: www.nhc.noaa.gov/HAW2/english/prepare/supply_kit.shtml

Disaster Supply Kit Checklist

- ❑ Flashlight (1 per person)
- ❑ Extra batteries
- ❑ First aid kit
- ❑ Extra medication
- ❑ Water (1g/person/day)
- ❑ Cash
- ❑ Radio (battery operated)
- ❑ Non-perishable food
- ❑ Blankets, pillows
- ❑ Extra set of keys
- ❑ Pet care items
- ❑ Toys, books, games
- ❑ Moisture wipes
- ❑ Toiletries
- ❑ Important documents

JOINT ACTIVITY: Add To Your Disaster Supply Kit

It is a good idea to add a few items to your disaster supply kit specifically for your child. In the event your family does evacuate, your child will need things to keep him or her occupied, such as a book or toy. The activity on the next page will help your child identify items they would like to have in their disaster kit. If possible, add these items to your kit. This will give your child some sense of comfort and control.

Be Disaster Ready

A disaster is an event that can cause a lot of damage and hurt many people. Because a disaster can happen quickly, it is important that you know ahead of time what to do in case a disaster happens in your area. To stay safe during an emergency or disaster, you will need to act quickly and know your family's disaster plan.

The first thing to remember during an emergency is to always follow any directions given by your school or local law enforcement agency. They will tell you where to go and what to do so that you, your family and friends will be as safe as possible. If you have to evacuate your house or school, go to a place you have previously chosen to meet at. If you cannot get to the designated meeting place, stay calm and go to a place you are familiar with, like a bus stop or restaurant and ask an adult for help.

If you happen to get separated from your family or classmates, do not panic. Try and find a telephone and call your family. If you cannot reach your family, call a friend or relative that your family has chosen in case of an emergency and let them know where you are. Sometimes you may not be able to call your family immediately. This is okay. It is important that you are safe first. You will be able to call your family as soon as possible.

What Would You Bring?

If you were permitted to put two things in your family's disaster supply kit, what would you select and why? List or draw these things below.

Item 1	Item 2

Fill out the emergency card below with help from your family and carry a copy with you. This way, you will have a copy with you in case of an emergency.

Emergency Contact Card

Name:_____ Phone:_____

Address:_____

Parent/Guardian:_____

Hm:_____ Wk:_____ Cell:_____

Emergency Meeting Place:_____

Outside of Area Contact:_____

Name:_____ Phone:_____

Address:_____

Some Common Questions And Answers

My child is worried about another hurricane. What should I say?

Children are often 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 approach of another hurricane, but also be reassuring. Tell your child something like this:

"*Being scared of another hurricane is normal. Many people are nervous because another hurricane may happen. However, everyone is working very hard to keep you, your family and your friends safe. Meteorologists at the National Hurricane Center and people at the fire and police departments are all working together to help people stay informed about the weather. If another hurricane does come in our area, we will have plenty of time to prepare for it.*"

(Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists; www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children_war.html)

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, or floating on water, or some other positive, calm image.
5) Remind your child that he or she can practice this before going to sleep or when nervous or scared.

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 hurricane 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" and call the help number. For non-emergencies, you can call **2-1-1** for a referral**. 2-1-1** provides callers with information about and referrals to human services such as basic needs (food banks, shelters, etc.), physical and mental health resources, employment support and volunteer opportunities and donations. If the 2-1-1 service is not currently available in your area, you can contact your local United Way or visit www.unitedway.org for a phone listing of your local United Way.

For information and referrals for mental health services in your area,
dial 2-1-1 or call your local mental health association.

Some Helpful Websites

FEMA for Kids
FEMA website for children to help them understand and prepare for disasters.
wwww.fema.gov/kids/

National Hurricane Center (official website)
Information on current and past storms, forecasting models and links to other pertinent websites.
www.nhc.noaa.gov/

Center for Mental Health Services: ***Tips For Talking About Disasters***
Excellent website containing advice and activities for discussing disasters with children.
www.mentalhealth.org/cmhs/emergencyservices/after.asp

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/NEAT/naturaldisaster_ho.html

Resources

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).

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.

La Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. K., & Wasserstein, S. B. (1998). Children's predisaster functioning as a predictor of posttraumatic stress following Hurricane Andrew. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 66,* 883-892.

La Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. S., Vernberg, E. M., & Roberts, M. C. (Eds.) (2002). *Helping Children Cope with Disasters and Terrorism.* Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.

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