

5 TIPS TO

SUPPORT CHILDREN DURING AN EMERGENCY



01

CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI-ADULTS

In crises events, children

- React and think differently than adults
- Have specific needs according to their ages
- Are vulnerable to adverse effects due to their physical sizes and social and emotional attachments to caregivers

02

COMMON FEARS

- Fear that the event will take place again.
- Fear that their loved ones or they themselves will be hurt or separated.

Focus on what current elements in their environment feel safe.

03

COMMON REACTIONS

Hyperactivity and poor concentration

Acting out behaviours, aggression

Clingy and demanding

Somatic complaints (stomach ache, headache)

Isolation



04

COMMUNICATION TIPS



- Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand
- Keep language simple and appropriate for each child's age
- Always be honest but don't overshare
- Speak slowly and calmly
- Minimize distractions

05

HELP CALM THEIR NERVOUS SYSTEM

five things Mindfulness Activity

5 things you can see 

4 things you can feel 

3 things you can hear 

2 things you can smell 

1 thing you can taste 



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AGE RELATED

COMMON REACTIONS DURING AN EMERGENCY

0-3

- Does not have language to express feelings
- Changes in play activity:
 - Less or no interest in playing or only playing for short periods, repetitive play
 - Plays aggressively and in a violent way
- More opposing and demanding than before
- Very sensitive to how others react

- Narrow understanding of the word, mostly self focused
- Preoccupied by death, without understanding the permanency
- Highly influenced by parent's reactions
- May experience sleep disturbances, including nightmares

4-6



7-12



- More abstract and logical thinking
- Divide the world into good-evil, right-wrong, reward-punishment
- Interested in concrete facts
- Grasp the permanency of death and loss
- Struggle with constant change

13-17

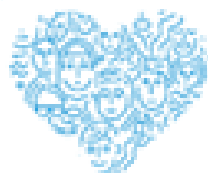
- May feel intense grief
- May feel guilt and shame that they were unable to help those who were hurt
- Show excessive concern about other affected persons
- May become self-absorbed and feel self-pity
- Become defiant of authorities/parents
- Highly influenced by peers
- Show an increase in risk-taking behavior or engage in self-destructive behavior



REMEMBER TO TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF TOO

!

- Children will often mirror adult reactions
- Children rely on adults for a sense of safety and security
- Pay attention to your own emotional regulation
- Don't hide feelings of sadness or fear as they give permission to children to feel as well



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