



PFA video handout 2.

Different reactions at different ages, and ways to help

1. Infants and toddlers

IF A CHILD	UNDERSTAND THAT	WAYS TO HELP
<p>Has problems sleeping, doesn't want to go to bed, won't sleep alone, or wakes up at night screaming.</p>	<p>When children are scared, they want to be with people who help them feel safe.</p> <p>Bedtime is a time for remembering because we are not busy doing other things.</p> <p>Children often dream about things they fear and can be scared of going to sleep.</p> <p>Understand that the child is not being difficult on purpose.</p>	<p>They worry when you are not together with them.</p> <p>If you were separated during the disaster, going to bed alone may remind your child of that separation.</p> <p>If possible, let your child sleep beside you. Let him or her know that this is just for now.</p> <p>Have a bedtime routine: A story, a prayer, cuddles etc. Tell the child the routine will happen every day, so the child knows what to expect.</p> <p>Put your arms around the child and tell the child that s/he is safe, that you are there, and that you will not leave.</p> <p>This may take time, but when the child feels safer, s/he will sleep better.</p>



<p>Worries that something bad will happen to you.</p>	<p>It is natural to have fears like this after being in danger.</p> <p>These fears may be even stronger if your child was separated from loved ones during the disaster.</p>	<p>Remind your child and yourself that right now you are safe.</p> <p>If you are not safe, talk about what you are doing to keep the child safe.</p> <p>Ensure that someone else will care for your child if something actually happens to you. This may help you worry less.</p> <p>Do positive activities together to help your child think of something else. Read a book or sing together – whatever the child likes doing.</p>
<p>Doesn't want to play or do anything.</p>	<p>Stress can make young children withdraw</p>	<p>Engage in play and joyful activities with your child</p>

2. Preschool children

IF A CHILD	UNDERSTAND THAT	WAYS TO HELP
<p>Seems like s/he doesn't have any feelings – neither happy nor sad.</p>	<p>Your child needs you. So much has happened, and the child may be feeling sad and overwhelmed.</p> <p>When children are distressed, some yell and others blank out their feelings. No matter what the reaction is, the child needs your love.</p>	<p>Sit by your child and put your arms around him or her. Let your child know that you care. If you can, try expressing the child's feelings. Let him or her know that it's okay to feel sad, mad or worried: "It seems like you don't want to do anything? I wonder if you are sad. It's okay to be sad. I will stay with you."</p>



<p>Cries a lot</p>	<p>Your family may have experienced overwhelmingly big changes because of the disaster, so it is natural that your child is sad.</p>	<p>If you yourself are overwhelmed by sadness, seek support. Your child's well-being is connected to your own well-being.</p> <p>Allow your child to express feelings of sadness.</p> <p>Help your child express his or her feelings and explain why it may feel like this: "I think you're sad. A lot of sad things have happened."</p> <p>Support your child by sitting together, by paying extra attention and by spending extra time together.</p> <p>Offer hope for the future to your child. Talk about how your lives will continue and the good things you will do, like seeing relatives, playing with friends etc.</p> <p>Take care of yourself too.</p>
--------------------	--	--



<p>Fears the disaster will return.</p>	<p>Fearing the return of a disaster is natural and it will take a while before the child feels safe again.</p>	<p>Protecting your child against reminders and comforting your child is important. Explain the difference between the event and memory of the event. Say to your child, "Even though it's raining, it doesn't mean that the hurricane will come back. A rainstorm is smaller and can't destroy like a hurricane can."</p> <p>Keep your child from television, radio and computers, as stories of the disaster can trigger fears of it happening again.</p> <p>Take cues from what your child seems to want to know. Provide simple responses and allow for more questions.</p>
--	--	--



<p>Not talking</p>	<p>Being silent or having difficulty expressing what is bothering him or her. Your child needs you to express common feelings such as anger, sadness and worry about the safety of parents, friends and siblings.</p> <p>This also applies to older agegroups</p>	<p>You can't force children to talk, but you can let them know they can talk to you any time they feel like talking.</p> <p>Draw simple 'smileys' for different feelings. Tell a brief story about each one, such as, "Do you remember when the water came into the house and you had a worried face like this?"</p> <p>Explain, "Children can feel really sad when their home is damaged."</p> <p>Using toys and drawings will help children express themselves.</p> <p>Then use words describing feelings to check how they really felt: "This is a really scary picture. Where you scared when you saw the water coming?"</p>
--------------------	---	--

3. School-age children

IF A CHILD	UNDERSTAND THAT	WAYS TO HELP
------------	-----------------	--------------



<p>Feels responsible for what happened.</p>	<p>School-age children may worry that they were responsible for the disaster, or that they should have been able to change what happened. They may not tell their concerns.</p>	<p>Provide opportunities for children to tell their concerns to you.</p> <p>Offer reassurance and tell them why it was not their fault.</p> <p>Explain, “After a disaster like this, lots of kids, and parents too, keep thinking: ‘What could I have done differently?’ Or ‘I should have been able to do something’.</p> <p>That does not mean they were at fault. Remember? The fire-fighter said no-one could save your pet and it wasn’t your fault”.</p>
<p>Retelling the event or playing out the event again and again.</p>	<p>This is a normal reaction to a crisis. If you permit the child to talk and act out the event, and if you encourage positive problem-solving through play and drawing, the child will gradually feel better.</p>	<p>Explain to your child: “You’re drawing a lot of pictures of what happened. Did you know that many children do that?”</p> <p>“It might help to draw how you would like your school to be rebuilt to make it safer”.</p>



<p>Confusion about what happened</p>	<p>Although school-aged children have a deeper understanding of how things are linked, they are still not fully able to think in abstract terms and logically. At the same time, they struggle with change and at times have 'magical thinking.'</p> <p>Therefore, they may not fully understand what happened. Without clear explanations, they will 'fill in the blanks' themselves.</p>	<p>Correct misunderstandings and provide clear explanations of what really happened whenever your child asks.</p> <p>Avoid details that would scare your child and try to make him or her calm down by saying e.g.: "I know other kids say that more tornadoes are coming, but now we are in a safe place."</p> <p>Continue to answer questions and reassure them that the family is safe. Don't get irritated.</p> <p>Let your children know what they can expect to happen next. Tell them about plans regarding school and where they will be living.</p> <p>Remind your children that there are people working to keep families safe and that your family can get more help if needed.</p>
--------------------------------------	--	--

4. Adolescents

IF A CHILD	UNDERSTAND THAT	WAYS TO HELP
------------	-----------------	--------------



<p>May be challenging you and /or turning to self-harming behavior such as using alcohol or drugs, engaging in accident-prone behavior.</p>	<p>Adolescents Even under the best of circumstances adolescents are in a process of disengaging themselves from childhood and entering adulthood.</p> <p>This is not an easy process, which even at normal times involves some challenging behavior.</p> <p>This may be reinforced when an adolescent is exposed to a crisis.</p>	<p>Scolding will only make the adolescent boy or girl feel even worse.</p> <p>Help adolescents understand that challenging the world is a dangerous way to express strong feelings such as anger. Explain: “Many teens and teenagers, and some adults, feel out of control and angry after a disaster like this.</p> <p>They think risky behavior will help somehow. It’s very normal to feel like that, but it’s not a good idea to do it. It will not make the problems go away.”</p> <p>For a while keep a closer watch on where they are going and what they are planning to do. Explain: “In the present situation it is important that I know where you are and how to contact you.”</p> <p>Assure that this is temporary and will stop when the situation has stabilized.</p>
---	---	--



<p>Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders.</p>	<p>HELP Fearing the return of a disaster is natural and it will take a while before the adolescent feels safe again.</p>	<p>Help the adolescent identify the scary reminders, such as certain people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, the time of day etc., and talk about the difference between the event and the reminders that occur after it.</p> <p>Explain: “When you’re reminded, you can try telling yourself that ‘I am upset now because I am being reminded, but it is different this time because there is no hurricane and I am safe.’”</p> <p>Explain that media coverage of the disaster can trigger fears of it happening again.</p> <p>Explain: “Watching the news report could make it worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?”</p>
<p>Concern for other survivors and families.</p>	<p>Adolescents tend to be very preoccupied with other people and how they themselves failed to do the right thing to help others.</p>	<p>Encourage your adolescents to support other people, but ensure that they don’t burden themselves too much. Help identify age-appropriate and meaningful projects such as clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need.</p>