



# SUPPORTING KIDS IN THE AFTERMATH OF NATURAL DISASTER, SCHOOL SHOOTING OR MASS VIOLENCE

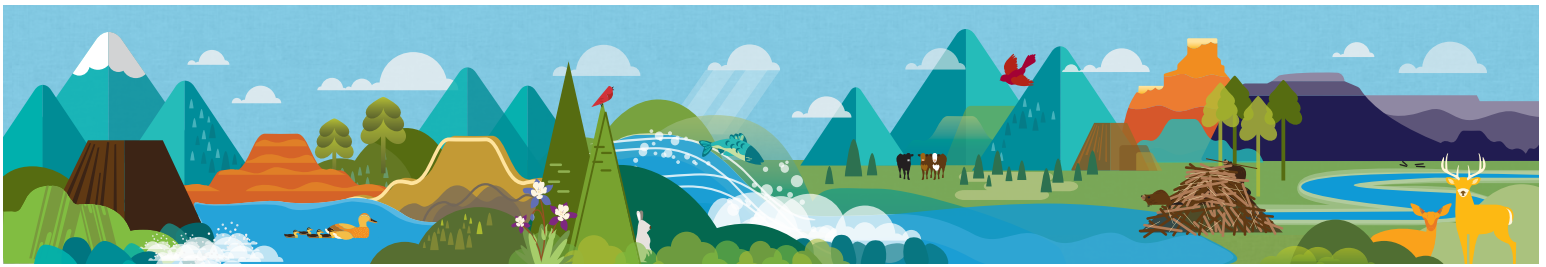
## Download the Help Kids Cope Mobile App

- Learn what to do and say before, during, and after wildfires, winter storms, floods, landslides, tornadoes, extreme heat, and earthquakes
- Explain different disasters to your kids using age-appropriate language
- Find tips on caring for yourself—as you care for your family
- Connect to activities, children’s books, tip sheets, and more



Children’s responses to trauma vary according to their age. Generally, children respond by reverting to behavior typical of an earlier developmental stage. It is important to recognize some changes are considered ‘normal’ if they are brief (less than three weeks) in duration. If symptoms continue, you may consider seeking help

AGE	COMMON REACTIONS	HELPFUL HINTS
1-4 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bed-wetting</li> <li>• Fear of darkness or being left alone</li> <li>• Excessive clinging</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Crying</li> <li>• Loss of bladder or bowel control</li> <li>• Speech difficulties</li> <li>• Immobility</li> <li>• Confusion</li> <li>• Disobedience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide calming words &amp; physical comforting</li> <li>• Give frequent attention</li> <li>• Establish comforting bedtime routines</li> <li>• Encourage expression through re-enactment</li> </ul>
5-11 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thumb-sucking</li> <li>• Irritability, whining</li> <li>• Clinging</li> <li>• Nightmares or fear of darkness</li> <li>• Aggression, competition for attention at school or home</li> <li>• Withdrawal from peers</li> <li>• Loss of interest, poor concentration</li> <li>• Headaches or other physical complaints</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Patience &amp; tolerance</li> <li>• Play sessions with adults &amp; peers</li> <li>• Discussions with adults &amp; peers</li> <li>• Slightly relaxed expectations temporarily</li> <li>• Opportunities for structured but not demanding chores &amp; responsibilities</li> <li>• Rehearse safety measures</li> </ul>
12-17 Years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Running away</li> <li>• Stealing</li> <li>• Sleeplessness</li> <li>• Difficulties with school or relationships</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol use</li> <li>• Inattentiveness or confusion</li> <li>• Aggressiveness, irritability</li> <li>• Radical changes in attitude</li> <li>• Premature entrance into adulthood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor media exposure</li> <li>• Spend time as a family talking about how everyone is feeling/doing</li> <li>• Bring friends &amp; families together</li> <li>• Encourage constructive activities</li> <li>• Encourage postponing major life decisions</li> <li>• Explain that strains on relationships &amp; changes in attitude are common but bounce back over time</li> </ul>



## HELPING YOUR FAMILY COPE

- Spend time being available to talk with your children.
- Really listen. Listen twice as much as you talk, be aware of what their concerns might be, give clear, simple answers. If you don't know the answer to a question it's OK to say that.
- Ask them what they already know.
- Encourage children to talk about their feelings, worries, daydreams and distractions. Accept the feelings they share, listen carefully and remind them that these are normal reactions following a very scary event.
- Provide information in a simple, clear and age-appropriate manner. Answer questions without giving more information than is necessary.
- Help your children feel safe. Talk with them about their concerns over safety. Remind them of ways you keep them safe. Go over your family's communication plan and practice phone numbers.
- Limit media exposure. Protect them from too much media coverage. Explain that TV, radio, the internet and social media can spread rumors and trigger fears.
- Maintain reasonable expectations or 'rules'. Stick with family rules, such as bedtimes, curfews, checking in with you while with friends, and keeping up with homework and chores. Staying in familiar routines as best as possible is reassuring.
- Address 'acting out' behaviors. Help them understand that acting out behaviors are a dangerous way to express strong feelings like anger and grief. Talk about other ways of coping with these feelings, such as fun activities, exercise, writing in a journal, spending time with family and friends.
- Be patient. It is normal for everyone to have a stress response to any potential threat in the environment. This can lead to a lack of patience. Remember, your loved one is not your enemy.

## WHEN TO SEEK SUPPORT FROM A MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

A few general guidelines may be useful in deciding when normal reactions to disaster become issues requiring assistance:

When disturbing emotions or behaviors last more than four to six weeks.	When a person's emotions or behaviors make it difficult to function normally, whether at home, work, school or out in the community.	Any time someone feels unstable or concerned about themselves.
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Find this and additional resources online at [MindSpringsHealth.org/MajorEvents](http://MindSpringsHealth.org/MajorEvents)

**24/7/365 Crisis Hotline: 844.493.TALK (8255)**  
**or Text TALK to 38255**

### OUR 12 MIND SPRINGS HEALTH LOCATIONS

<b>ASPEN</b> 970.920.5555	<b>GLENWOOD SPRINGS</b> 970.945.2583	<b>RANGELY</b> 970.675.8411
<b>CRAIG</b> 970.824.6541	<b>GRANBY</b> 970.887.2179	<b>STEAMBOAT SPRINGS</b> 970.879.2141
<b>EAGLE</b> 970.328.6969	<b>GRAND JUNCTION</b> 970.241.6023	<b>VAIL</b> 970.476.0930
<b>FRISCO</b> 970.668.3478	<b>MEEKER</b> 970.878.5112	<b>WALDEN</b> 970.723.0055