

SUPPORTING YOUR FAMILY IN THE EVENT OF A FLOOD

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



Floods are the most common natural weather event and are temporary conditions when an area is overcome by water or mudflow. Floods in our area can occur under many conditions including snowmelt, overflowing drainage systems and heavy rainfall.

Areas recovering from wildfire are often prone to flash flooding and debris flows, especially near steep terrain. Rainfall that would normally be absorbed will run off extremely quickly after a wildfire as burned soil can be as water repellent as pavement and, as a result, much less rainfall is required to produce a flash flood.

BEHAVIORAL SIGNS THAT MAY INDICATE A CHILD IS REACTING TO THE EVENT

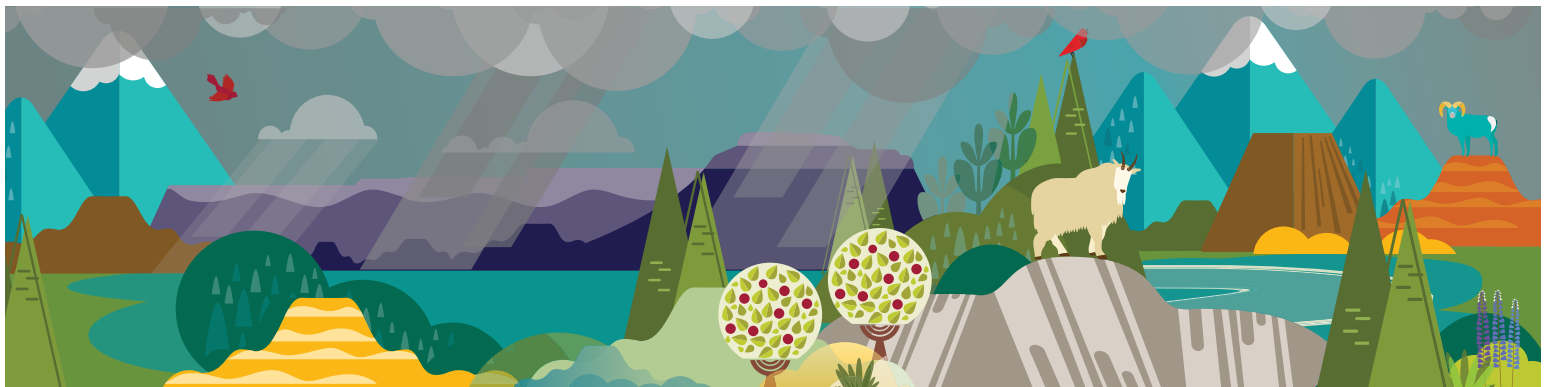
Birth – 2 years: Infants may react to trauma as a result of their parents’ anxiety and/or reaction. This may include being irritable, crying more than usual or wanting to be cuddled.

Preschool: Children at this age do not have the capacity to fully understand but may understand enough to feel helpless and overwhelmed. They may feel fear and insecurity about being separated from caregivers.

Elementary School: These children have a better ability to understand and sometimes become intensely preoccupied with the details of the event and want to talk more about it. Other reactions may include sadness, generalized or specific fears about the event happening again.

THINGS I CAN DO FOR MYSELF

- Take care of yourself. Make sure you take good physical care of yourself, including eating well, sleeping well, getting exercise, and receiving proper medical care.
- Listen to each other. Parents and other caregivers should provide support for each other during this time.
- Put off major decisions. Avoid making any unnecessary life-altering decisions during this stressful period.
- Give yourself a break. Try not to overdo clean-up activities. These activities may include lifting heavy items or working for extended periods of time. Using moderation when doing such work can reduce injury.



THINGS I CAN DO FOR MY CHILD

- **MODEL CALM BEHAVIOR.** Be as calm as you can with your child. Kids often mirror the reaction of adults around them and will learn ideas for how to take care of themselves from what parents and caregivers do. Provide simple and accurate information in a quiet, steady voice
- **ENCOURAGE COMFORTING OR DISTRACTING ACTIVITIES.** Children may benefit from doing slow breathing to calm their bodies, having a stuffed animal or blanket to hold or being distracted from the storm by dancing, singing or playing games. Give your child more hugs, hand holding, or time in your lap. Playing outside may not be safe.
- **SPEND TIME TALKING WITH YOUR CHILD.** This will let your child know that it is OK to ask questions and to express their concerns. Issues may need to be discussed more than one time. You should remain flexible and open to answering repeated and new questions and providing clarifications. Parents & caregivers should not force children to talk about what is happening.
- **REAFFIRM SAFETY.** Reassure kids that they are safe. Remind them that they can always tell you when they are afraid in any situation. Let them speak about the feelings and validate all reactions to the event. Support the appropriate expression of their feelings and help to put them in perspective.
- **GIVE SUPPORT AT BEDTIME.** Children may become anxious when they separate from their parents, in particular at bedtime. First try to spend more time with your child at bed time with such activities as reading a book. It's okay to make a temporary arrangement for young children to sleep with you, but with the understanding that they will go back to normal sleeping arrangements at a set future date.
- **MONITOR ADULT CONVERSATIONS.** Be aware of what is being said during adult conversations about the flooding. Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened unnecessarily about something they do not understand.
- **KEEP THINGS HOPEFUL.** Even in the most difficult situations, it is important to identify some positive aspect and to stay hopeful for the future. A positive and optimistic outlook helps children see the good things in the world around them. This outlook can be one way to help them get through even the most challenging times.
- **OBSERVE EMOTIONAL STATES.** It may take time for the emotional impact to reach the child or adolescent. When it does, provide nurturance (hugs, empathy, kindness, calm support) and ask about their thoughts and feelings. Be prepared for children to need this several times. Some will not express themselves verbally but changes in behavior, appetite or sleep patterns can indicate anxiety or stress. Seek help from a mental health professional for those with more intense reactions.

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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MIND SPRINGS *health*

Prevention. Care. Recovery.

Find this and additional resources online at
MindSpringsHealth.org/MajorEvents

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

OUR 12 MIND SPRINGS HEALTH LOCATIONS

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