

YOUR PREPAREDNESS FACT

This Week

Children & Crisis Events



Over the past two years, it seems as though there have been more and more natural disasters occurring all around us throughout the world. When we get home from a long, hard-day's work and begin our evening rituals, we turn on the television to catch up on all the news-worthy events of the day. Earthquakes, landslides, fires, floods, war, not to mention our local news which includes shootings, robberies, and lost children! The older we get, the more we tend to ignore the severity of it all. We've become hardened by such frequent events. Have you thought about the children in the room? When children see emergencies and disasters on television, it can sometimes bother them and create worry or stress in their lives. Children can be afraid of things they don't understand, so if you take time to discuss emergencies and being prepared *with* them, it will help not only calm their fears, but make them a more confident and prepared person.

When parents and caregivers or other family members deal with crisis situations calmly and confidently, children feel more confident and secure. A child's reactions are influenced by the behavior they see. The better prepared you are, the more reassuring you may be during an emergency. This can help children cope.

Before a Crisis Event

- **Get informed.** Know what hazards are in your area. Know evacuation routes and disaster plans where you and your family spend time.
- **Develop a family disaster plan.** Being prepared can help the whole family cope and have a greater sense of control.
- **Assemble a disaster supply kit.** This kit can help your family stay safe and be more comfortable during and after a crisis event.

Normally, as adults, we tend to take care of the above on our own without inviting children to participate, which I think, is ignoring the most opportune time to make children feel not only at ease but part of the planning process. Not only will they feel like an important part of the family, they will also remember how the plan and supplies come into play if they are a part of it from its inception. Include children in the planning process. This will reinforce the reason behind it all.



During and After a Crisis Event

Show understanding. After a crisis, children are most afraid that the event will happen again, someone close to them will be killed or hurt, or that they will be left alone or separated from their family. You can help them by:

- Sharing facts with them about the event and plans to keep them safe.
- Encouraging them to talk or express what they are feeling.
- Listening to their concerns.
- Giving them specific tasks to do. This lets them know they can help and can restore a sense of control.
- Spending extra time with them.
- Re-establishing daily routines.
- Understanding that children have different reactions to crisis events based on their maturity, age and experience.
- Knowing when and how to get help for a child who continues to suffer.

Monitor and limit your family's exposure to the media. The news can bring out fear and confusion among children and adults. Watching images over and over can cause younger children to believe the event is happening again and again. Parents and caregivers might want to talk about what is being shown on TV with them.

Use support networks. Parents and caregivers are almost always the best source of support for their children in difficult times. It is important for adults to understand their own feelings to manage their reactions better. Adults in control of their feelings are better able to support their children.

For more information on coping with disaster or traumatic event go to:
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/>

Do YOUR part for Emergency Preparedness....pass on the information!

