



# PREPARING YOUR KIDS FOR EMERGENCIES

As you plan ahead for an emergency, it is important that you discuss potential hazards with your children. Make sure they understand what might happen and what their job is during an emergency. Emergencies are scary situations, but if you talk about them beforehand, your kids may stay much calmer.



In a disaster, children will look to you and other adults for help. How you react to an emergency gives them clues on how to act. If you react with alarm, your child may become more scared. They see your fear as proof that the danger is real. If you seem overcome with a sense of loss, your child may feel their losses more strongly.

Feelings of fear are healthy and natural for both adults and children. But as an adult, you need to keep control of the situation. When you're sure that danger has passed, concentrate on your child's emotional needs by asking the child what's uppermost in his or her mind. Having children participate in the family's recovery activities will help them feel that their life will soon return to "normal." Your response during this time may have a lasting impact.

## ***Reducing Fear in Uncertain Circumstances***

Disasters often strike quickly and without warning. They are frightening for adults, and can be traumatic for children, especially if they don't know what to do. During a disaster, your family may have to leave your home and depart from your daily routine. Children may become anxious, confused, or frightened. It is important to give children guidance that will help them reduce their fears.

Children's fears may also arise from their imagination, and you should take these feelings seriously. A child who feels afraid is afraid. Your words and actions can provide reassurance. When talking with your child, be sure to present a realistic picture that is both honest and manageable.

## ***Helping kids cope***

Children in particular can feel the stress deeply, and may react in different ways. The key to helping your children cope is simply by being there and making them feel safe.

- Take their fears seriously and tell them that it's okay to be scared.
- Explain the events as best you can and acknowledge what's frightening about what happened.
- Tell your kids what you think and feel. Doing so helps them feel less alone if they know that their feelings are similar to yours.
- Maintain familiar routines, like mealtimes and regular bedtime hours.
- While parents can play a huge role in helping children deal with anxiety, it may be helpful to talk to a professional such as a psychologist or social worker, who can help children understand and cope with their emotions.



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## **Make a Plan**

- Develop your evacuation procedure as a family so your children understand where you are going and why.
- Develop a communications procedure as a family by writing down all the phone numbers you and your kids would need, as well as how to get in touch with each other if you are separated. Identify trusted people to assist your children until your family reconnects.
- Let your kids be involved in every process of planning.



## **Get a Kit**

- Put your emergency kits together as a family.
- Make it fun. Create a list together, then have a scavenger hunt to gather supplies for the kit.
- Discuss why it is important to have each item in the kit.
- Include toys and activities in your kit.

## **Practice**

- Practice monthly what you might do as a family in different emergency situations so children do not forget.
- Let your kids ask questions and give their opinions regarding your plan's effectiveness.
- The more they talk about it, the more likely they will be ready when something happens, and the more comfortable they will feel.

## **Where to Find Additional Information**

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)—<https://www.ready.gov/kids>
- American Red Cross—<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/children>
- Centers for Disease Control—<http://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/>
- SesameStreet.Org—  
<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/ready#>
- Ready Army—[www.ready.army.mil](http://www.ready.army.mil)

**It's up to you. Prepare strong. Get an emergency supply kit with enough supplies for at least three days, make an emergency plan with your family and be informed about what might happen.**

