

Have you and your family been affected by a disaster?

Children and youth react to disasters differently than adults. Adults need to know what type of reactions to look for and when to seek additional help.

Here are some common reactions children may have to disasters:

Preschool Children (0–5 years old)

- Changing eating and sleeping habits
- Feeling general fear, uncertainty, and anxiety
- Experiencing sleep disturbances such as nightmares or night terrors
- Showing aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience

Children (6–10 years old)

- Feeling concern over their own safety and the safety of their family
- Engaging in reckless or aggressive behavior or not acting their age
- Having trouble paying attention in school or not wanting to go to school
- Experiencing difficulty falling asleep or having nightmares

Youth and Adolescents (11–19 years old)

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Engaging in risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use
- Experiencing unexplained aches and pains
- Resisting authority or starting arguments

If your child is experiencing any of the listed or other reactions 2–4 weeks after a disaster or if signs suddenly start later after the disaster, you may want to seek professional support.

THERE ARE PLACES TO GO FOR HELP.

Disaster Distress Helpline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-985-5990
(English and español)

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

SAMHSA's National Helpline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-662-HELP
(1-800-662-4357)

(English and español)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-273-TALK
(1-800-273-8255)

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY
(1-800-799-4889)

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-662-HELP
(1-800-662-4357)

(24/7 English and español)

TDD: 1-800-487-4889

SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health
Services Administration

FOR MORE INFORMATION on common disaster reactions in children as well as tips for talking to children after a disaster, check out the *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers* at <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/tips-talking-helping-children-youth-cope-after-disaster-or-traumatic-event-guide-parents>. Other disaster mental health resources are available on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Technical Assistance Center website at <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac> or call us at 1-800-308-3515.

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) • www.samhsa.gov