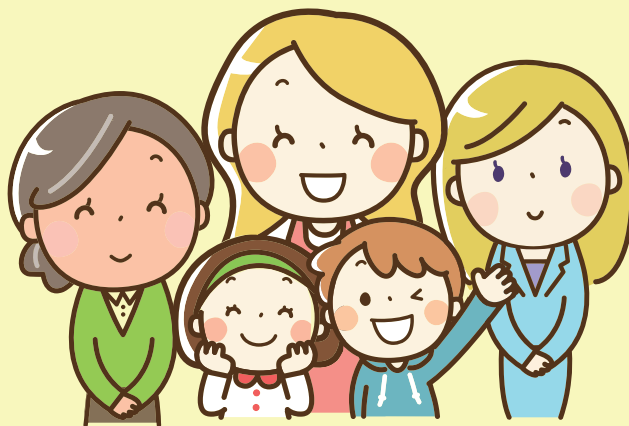


Natural Disaster Preparation and Subsequent Care

**Mental Health Care
for Nursery & Kindergarten Teachers**





WHEN LOOKING AFTER CHILDREN

During natural disasters, children also endure a great mental shock and may show various stress responses.

For example they may:

- ♪ Unable to be separated from parents or teachers
- ♪ Unable to go to the bathroom alone
- ♪ Unable to calm down or lose their liveliness
- ♪ Unable to do things they previously could, such as backtracking in toilet training
- ♪ Cry suddenly in the night
- ♪ Express the experience of being in the disaster in play, such as make-believe earthquake
- ♪ Repeat stories about the experience of living through the disaster



As these are very natural responses,
it is likely helpful to communicate,

"How do you feel?"

"It's okay to feel scared."

and to gently draw them close and say,

"I'm here with you."

"I will protect you."

Did you know?



There are certain times and situations when it is necessary to keep children away from pictures and videos related to the disaster.

Make sure to monitor children from what they see and hear.

Children gain a sense of security and safety with a caregiver they trust.

Stay with them, listen to whatever they say and feel and embrace them.

If you need help, you can ask a mental health specialist you trust.



INTERACTING WITH PARENTS

As with normal times, in the event of a disaster, teachers play a hand in supporting parents.

It is likely a good idea to bear in mind the following.

- ♪ There is a very large psychological upset and burden on individuals that have suffered specific damage, such as destruction of their home or workplace, physical injury, or the death of a family member or relative.
Watching over and drawing close to them will likely be necessary long-term.

- ♪ Even among fellow parents there will be a great difference in the degree of damage. Sharing among fellow parents, such as gathering with parents and discussing, may be supportive, but there are also situations when it is necessary to meet individually with parents. Please consider necessary responses while observing the parents' circumstances and state.

- ♪ Actively strive for casual exchanges such as sharing news, giving greetings, and tea parties. Be conscientious to greet all parents, even parents who look busy with work or household matters.

- ♪ Not all parents will take the initiative to start conversation. In that case, it may be best for you to try to start a conversation with the parent while discussing how their child is doing in nursery/school. With discussion of the child as a start, it will likely become easier to mention the parent's thoughts, worries, physical or mental difficulties, and the like.

- ♪ Parents will feel at ease if their child is comfortable at nursery/school.

- ♪ Using "When Looking After Children", and "Self-Care for Teachers", as a reference, it may be beneficial to share stress responses in children and self-care methods with parents.



While providing care to your children, be sure to focus on your own care as well. Administrative staff and nursery/school principals with specific responsibilities tend to try to do the impossible.

Bear in mind personal care and know your limits. It is important to take care of yourself in the moment.

Potential Symptoms of Stress Response

- I haven't been able to sleep well.
- I haven't been able to fall asleep, and/or I have woken up early in the morning.
- I have lost my appetite.
- I cry more frequently.
- I have been unable to concentrate.
- I have lost interest in things that were once pleasurable.
- I have been depressed.
- I have felt anxious and restless.
- I have had flashbacks of the disaster.
- I have tried not to think about the disaster.
- My memories feel blocked.
- I have been apathetic.
- I have felt irritable and critical others.
- I have nightmares.
- I have increased consumption of alcoholic beverages.

One Month After the Disaster and Onward

The conditions described above may continue for more than a month or appear later. In particular, the stress response may appear later in administrative staff than general staff teachers. There is a tendency to care for others after the disaster, and for the stress response to occur when things have calmed down.

Exercise caution if experiencing any of the above conditions.

After the Disaster Mid-to-Long Term

Although the intensity of the experience during the disaster and the painful memories decrease over time, they are likely to remain embedded in one's emotions. It is important to accept your feelings and keep moving forward.

There will likely be times when one is unexpectedly exposed to media related to the disaster. It is not necessary to force oneself to talk about disasters or look at such images until one feels ready to do so.

In the event of a disaster, one should take the previously mentioned steps to deal with stress response at a comfortable pace.

Try it!



What is self-care?

♥ Be kind to yourself.

Those providing support are working harder than they realize, they might not notice their own fatigue. Treat yourself with kindness and compassion.

- ♪ Take regular breaks.
- ♪ Warm yourself with hot drinks and blankets, etc.
- ♪ Go to bed early.
- ♪ Eat as regularly as possible.
- ♪ Participate in light exercise.

♥ Talk to someone.

It is important to share and discuss your feelings regarding the situation- this may help reassure you made the right decision.

- ♪ Speak with those around you.
- ♪ Make time to talk with trusted family or friends.
- ♪ Try talking with colleagues from the same occupation, it does not matter if they live close to you or far away.

♥ Getting away.

Refresh yourself by getting out of town. This will give you a chance to recover.

- ♪ Purposefully create a change of pace and give yourself a rest.
- ♪ Make the decision to separate yourself from the reminders of the disaster. It is important to stay away from images and places that may bring up the event.
- ♪ Speak with an expert or participate in a workshop on the mind and emotions.

Did you know?



Dealing with a difficult experience, such as a disaster, may lead to personal growth.

- ♪ You may become able to accept the vulnerability, pain, and emotional difficulty of others and yourself.
- ♪ You may believe in recovery and find the patience to wait for it.
- ♪ You may develop stronger bonds with your peers and colleagues through sharing the experience.
- ♪ You may, through your own experience, be able to help others in a similar situation.



Peers are colleagues with the same occupation and the similar experiences. In turn, **peer support** means support from colleagues. We have learned that support from peers (childcare professionals, fellow licensed nursery/school teachers, fellow nursery/school principals) becomes an extremely important support during disasters as well.

Try it!



- ♪ Connecting in partnership with peers is supportive and uniting. Even something as simple as “nice to meet you” is effective.
- ♪ It might find it better to speak with teachers from nurseries/schools in other communities. Since there is separation between groups, it may be easier disclose emotional information.
- ♪ Though it is often easier to send supportive messages through written forms, such as text messages, letters, or emails, using vocal methods conveys a sense of warmth that might otherwise be missed.
- ♪ Even with the best intentions, it would be best to implement peer support over an extended period of time (e.g., weeks, months).
- ♪ While providing peer support, you should continue to care for the children. Please strive for a relationship of watching over the children while speaking freely about topics including daily care and behaviors to disaster-related events.
- ♪ During peer support, discussion topics can vary from everyday topics, like care for the children, to solemn topics, like the disaster; allow conversation to flow freely.
- ♪ On the other hand, providing support may bring one’s trauma back to the surface. It is best to consult with a mental health specialist to monitor your wellbeing.

Peer Support in the Nursery/School



After a disaster, you may feel upset, nervous, or scared which is natural. It may be beneficial after a disaster to discuss how you are coping with your experiences and emotions with peers.

Sharing your experiences and emotions with your peers is a good way to strengthen the bond between those around you and build your confidence.

It is important to wait until people are ready to talk.

Each person will deal with trauma at a different pace corresponding with the amount of damage sustained.

Continued peer support and cooperation in the workplace-for example, allowing adjustments to duties and extra time off-promotes long term recovery.



DISASTER PREPARATION AND RECOVERY CHECKLIST

Before the Disaster

- Plan evacuation route.
- Practice evacuation drills.
- Be aware of dangerous areas in the nursery/school and around the facility.
- Prepare necessary food and supplies.
- Have a plan to be able to contact parents during a disaster.
- Know the home owners in the neighbors around the nursery/school.
- Learn the warning signs of somatic response in children and adults.
- Discuss how to care for special needs children in the event of a disaster.
- Maintain effective daily communication between staff.
- Set up your peer support network with other nurseries/schools before the disaster.
- Make a connection with the mental health specialists and physicians in your area.
- Make sure all staff knows that things might not go as planned and individual judgement is important.

Immediate After the Disaster

- Ensure safety (open doors, gather/evacuate in a safe location, etc.).
- Make sure all children and staff are out of harms way and safe.
- Respond to anxiety in children.
- Protect children whose parents are having difficulty picking them up.
- Make sure all of the staff members and children have safe places to go.
This may include going to an evacuation site, having them stay at your home, etc.
- Be sure that no one ends up alone.
- Communicate a plan for the next day (or longer) with all staff.

Two Days After the Disaster

- Confirm the status of damage to the nursery/school as a whole.
- Pick up, clean, and restore the nursery/school building as much as possible.
- Communicate between staff members and meet the situation appropriately.
- Remember staff members may be struggling personally (at home or mentally) and demonstrate care when working with them.
- Make sure staff members have enough time to tend to personal matters, restoring homes, corresponding with family and rest.
- Actively stay in contact and exchange information with caregivers at other nurseries/schools.
- Survey the damage and decide on a possible day to reopen the nursery/school.
- After opening, observe children and parents. And deal with any changes seen.
- Check staff for stress responses and fatigue, while handling day-to day interactions, line time off, work duties, and communications.
- In collaboration with a mental health specialist, introduce counseling, etc.



Creating Peer Support Network for First Responders, Teachers, and Caregivers
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Should you have any feedback, questions, and/or concerns
in regards to this pamphlet, please contact us.

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