

Tips for Parents: Help Your Child Cope with Natural Disasters

As with any natural disaster, the recent earthquake in Haiti will affect far more people than those caught directly in its path. Those with friends or family living in the area of a disaster will certainly experience serious concern or grief, but even people with no direct connections to the affected region may find themselves distressed by non-stop news coverage and disturbing images shown on television. Your own child may be feeling quietly frightened by what he or she has seen or heard, even though you may notice no outward signs of concern.

Please refer to the links below for information on helping your child navigate the emotions he or she may be feeling at this time. If your family has been seriously affected by this or any natural disaster and you feel your child needs additional assistance, do not hesitate to contact our Student Services Department: (716) 807-3535.

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/distress-earthquake.aspx>

http://www.naspcenter.org/safe_schools/trauma.html

From the source:

- Take a news break. Watching endless replays of footage from the disaster can make your stress even greater. Although you will want to keep informed – especially if you have loved ones in Haiti – taking a break from watching the news can lessen your distress.
- Control what you can. There are routines in your life that you can continue such as going to work or school and making meals. It is helpful to maintain these routines and schedules to give yourself a break from constantly thinking about the earthquake.
- Engage in healthy behaviors. Eat well-balanced meals, engage in regular exercise like going for a long walk, and get plenty of rest. Bolstering your physical well-being is good for your emotional health and can enhance your ability to cope.
- Keep things in perspective. While an earthquake can bring tremendous hardship and loss, remember to focus on the things that are good in your life. Persevere and trust in your ability to get through the challenging days ahead.
- Find a productive way to help if you can. Many organizations are set up to provide various forms of aid to survivors. Contributing or volunteering is a positive action that can help you to make a difference.
- Strive for a positive outlook. Many people who have experienced tragedy find that they grow in some respect as a result of persevering through the hardship. Over time, people can discover personal strengths and develop a greater appreciation for life.