



Boys Town Releases Tips for Helping Kids in the Aftermath of a Natural Disaster

Natural disasters are an uncontrollable and many times unpredictable stressor for youth and families. Often times, natural disasters offset the normalcy of everyday life while bringing to the surface intense fears and anxieties. These events may displace families, cause significant devastation to their dwelling/community, and undermine their sense of safety and security. While natural disasters present families with unique challenges, there are an abundance of tools and strategies to help them cope with the events and continue to move forward.

“Parent(s) are a child's greatest asset following a natural disaster. The child will look to them as a litmus of safety and for guidance. Indeed, it is normal for youth to go through an adjustment period following an event that produced substantial fear and safety concerns,” said Boys Town psychologist Dr. Jason Gallant. “It is important for parents to emphasize that it is okay to have these feelings, provide a safe and inviting environment for child expression, and, most importantly, serve as a model for how to cope, recover, and move on.”

Here are some other tips for helping your kids in the aftermath of a natural disaster or other tragedy.

1. Always be available and listen to your child when they want to talk, but don't force children to talk about their feelings.
2. Parents, friends and teachers can all be great sources of support, caring and understanding for kids.
3. You might be fearful and unsettled yourself. Seek adult comfort. Parents should convey confidence in the future and that, “things will be okay” to their children.
4. Getting kids back to their normal activities and their regular schedule as soon as possible promotes positive coping and healing. Routines are comforting to kids.
5. Give kids the time and space to sort through and process their feelings.
6. Monitor kids and stay vigilant as the healing process continues, even months after the event.

Through all of this, you should remain vigilant and watchful, and continue to keep your eyes and ears open for signals of deeper problems. These might include changes in eating or sleeping habits or not being able to return to normal activities. If you notice these or other red flags continuing two weeks or longer after the event, you should seek professional help from a licensed mental health professional.

For more information about helping your child in the aftermath of a crisis, visit

<http://www.boystown.org/parenting/guides/crisis>.

About Boys Town

For 100 years, Boys Town has been a beacon of hope for America's children and families through its life-changing youth care and health care programs. In 2015, almost 500,000 children and families across the United States were impacted by Boys Town programs. This includes those who received services from Boys Town's residential programs as well as those served by the many varied programs that comprise the Boys Town Integrated Continuum of Child and Family Services, including In-Home Family Services, health care services provided by Boys Town National Research Hospital and the Boys Town National Hotline. You can find more information about Boys Town online at www.Boystown.org.

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