

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Growing together through natural disasters - Earthquake

Information and activity sheet for families with babies and young children



When natural disasters happen, nearly everyone has some emotional response, whether they're affected directly or indirectly.

People of all ages from infants to adults may experience thoughts, feelings, physical reactions or behaviours that are intense, confusing and frightening.

Little people manage their feelings through their relationships with parents and other caring adults.

It's important to look after your own emotional wellbeing so you can stay calm and support your child.

If your child doesn't seem to 'be themselves', think about what their behaviour may be telling you. They may need more reassurance and connection with you. Sometimes they might need more support from their teacher or educator, doctor or child health nurse, or another professional.

In times of stress, babies and young children may

- become worried, but may not have the words to tell you
- be clingy or whiny, cry, seem more helpless or emotional
- have tantrums or become aggressive
- eat less or more than usual
- have trouble sleeping, have nightmares, or seem more tired than usual
- want to be closer to their parents or carers, needing more cuddles

Parents and carers can

- read the story over the page with your child and talk about the pictures
- name your child's feelings, for example, 'You seem to be feeling sad'
- spend time each day having fun with your child, for example blowing bubbles, playing games, reading stories
- make sure your child's favourite toy or blanket is always handy for comfort

- answer questions honestly in language your child can understand, but don't give more information than they need
- maintain regular routines like meal-times, bath-time, getting up time
- limit your child's exposure to media about the event (TV, radio, newspapers, online)
- keep adult conversations about the event away from babies and young children

Let others help

- talk with your child's other carers, such as kindy teachers, about how your child is feeling
- stay in contact with friends, family and other parents by video-chat and phone if not in person
- do things that are good for you, to look after yourself physically, socially and emotionally

If you or your family are finding it difficult to cope, professional help is available.



Where to get help

- Your doctor or child health nurse
- 1300HEALTH 13 43 25 84
- Lifeline (24hr) **131 114**
- beyond blue info line **1300 224 636**



Birdie and the Earthquake



One day Birdie felt a strange shaking in the ground. The earth started to move and groan. 'It's an earthquake!' said Birdie. She felt scared



When the earthquake stopped, there was mess everywhere. Houses were broken. Birdie's nest had fallen down. Birdie felt sad.



Helpers came to fix the houses and clean up the mess.



They built Birdie a new nest. Birdie felt safe and happy again



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Read the full version of Birdie and the Earthquake, watch the animation, play games and get more information on the Birdie's Tree website. Browse 'Birdie's Tree'

Birdie's Tree - Growing together through natural disasters | CHQ (health.qld.gov.au)

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www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/

