

How Birdie's Tree can help



Birdie's Tree resources are designed to support expectant and new parents, infants, young children and families in relation to natural disasters.

- ✓ Birdie storybooks
- ✓ Online interactive games and activities
- ✓ Information sheets and booklets
- ✓ Early Childhood Curriculum
- ✓ Birdie's Tree Recovery Program

Preparedness (before or in the absence of a natural disaster)

- Help young children learn words for 'big feelings'
- Build children's vocabulary around weather and other challenging events
- Help children understand in advance that while natural disasters do cause disruption and distress, it's normal for people to survive and recover
- Build foundations for early literacy through vocabulary, fonts and illustrations used in the books and games, and inclusion of songs and rhymes
- Encourage parents and carers to discuss the emotional impacts of events and situations with their young children in positive, hopeful, age-appropriate ways
- Support parents and children to read, play, talk and learn together

Response (during or immediately after a natural disaster)

- Help adults (including first responders and emergency staff as well as parents and carers) respond to the emotional needs of young children experiencing unfamiliar, frightening situations and stimuli
- Support children's emotional regulation (e.g. soothing through songs)
- Restore a sense of safety
- Provide pleasant distraction for young children while parents are dealing with immediate needs such as accommodation
- Provide 'containment' of the natural disaster within a narrative form (beginning, middle, end)
- Give young children a sense of mastery over the natural disaster (it is contained within a book which can be opened, closed, put away or opened at a different place; it can be 'played with' and manipulated through games and activities)



Recovery (following a natural disaster)

- Help young children, their parents and carers process the experience of the natural disaster and its impacts
- Help children integrate memories of the natural disaster into their sense of self and their life going forward
- Strengthen the relationship between parent and child through reading, talking and playing together
- Equip parents, carers and other adults with information about self-care and the care of children following a natural disaster, including warning signs of delayed emotional recovery, and where to seek further help and support if required

What does the literature say?

- Children know more than we think – don't avoid discussion
- Provide age-appropriate information
- Language helps children grasp and share their experiences
- It helps to have words for 'big feelings' (emotional literacy)
- Increased knowledge decreases anxiety
- Involve children in planning – enable their agency in response and recovery
- Don't scare – talk about what happened, what can be done, what will happen next
- Interaction + guidance = problem-focused coping
- Children process emotional experiences through play
- Therapeutic stories help contain, structure and interpret emotional experiences
- Therapeutic games and activities provide positive emotional experiences to help counteract negative ones

Birdie's Tree messages for babies and young children:

- Natural disasters are no-one's fault, and certainly not yours
- You are safe and loved
- You are not alone
- Distressing events end
- Order will be restored
- Adults will take responsibility for fixing things
- It's okay to have 'big feelings' and to talk about them

Birdie's Tree messages for adults

- You are not alone
- Distressing events end
- Order will be restored
- It's okay to have 'big feelings' and to talk about them
- Take care of yourself, to take care of children
- Help is available – don't be afraid to ask

For more information Google 'Birdie's Tree' or email Birdies-Tree@health.qld.gov.au

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