

# Have you and your family been affected by a disaster?

Children and youth react to disasters differently than adults. Adults need to know what type of reactions to look for and when to seek additional help.

## Here are some common reactions children may have to disasters:

### Preschool Children (0–5 years old)

- Changing eating and sleeping habits
- Feeling general fear, uncertainty, and anxiety
- Experiencing sleep disturbances such as nightmares or night terrors
- Showing aggressive or withdrawn behavior, hyperactivity, speech difficulties, and disobedience

### Children (6–10 years old)

- Feeling concern over their own safety and the safety of their family
- Engaging in reckless or aggressive behavior or not acting their age
- Having trouble paying attention in school or not wanting to go to school
- Experiencing difficulty falling asleep or having nightmares

### Youth and Adolescents (11–19 years old)

- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Engaging in risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use
- Experiencing unexplained aches and pains
- Resisting authority or starting arguments

If your child is experiencing any of the listed or other reactions 2–4 weeks after a disaster or if signs suddenly start later after the disaster, you may want to seek professional support.

## THERE ARE PLACES TO GO FOR HELP.

### Disaster Distress Helpline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-985-5990  
(English and español)

TTY: 1-800-846-8517

### SAMHSA's National Helpline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-662-HELP  
(1-800-662-4357)

(English and español)

TTY: 1-800-487-4889

### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-273-TALK  
(1-800-273-8255)

TTY: 1-800-799-4TTY  
(1-800-799-4889)

### Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator

TOLL-FREE: 1-800-662-HELP  
(1-800-662-4357)

(24/7 English and español)

TDD: 1-800-487-4889

# SAMHSA

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

FOR MORE INFORMATION on common disaster reactions in children as well as tips for talking to children after a disaster, check out the *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers* at <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/tips-talking-helping-children-youth-cope-after-disaster-or-traumatic-event-guide-parents>. Other disaster mental health resources are available on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Technical Assistance Center website at <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac> or call us at 1-800-308-3515.

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SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.  
1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727) • 1-800-487-4889 (TDD) • [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)