

# Harris County Community!

## Helping Kids Cope With Disasters

Natural disasters can be frightening and may impact your child's sense of safety and daily life. As a parent, friend, family, or teacher you can help the child deal with the disaster by remaining calm and comforting.

**Here are some common reactions, useful tips and activities:**

### Common Reactions

- Upset over the simplest thing
- Becoming loud, noisy and aggressive
- Being shy and afraid
- Developing nighttime fears such as not wanting to sleep alone, needing a night light or having nightmares
- Easily upset, crying and whining
- Goes back to "baby" behavior such as thumb-sucking or bed-wetting
- Clinging to parent and not wanting to go to school or day care
- Signs of illness such as headache, vomiting or fever

### Tips for Parents or Other Caring Adults

- Talk with them about their feelings and listen to what they say
- Assure fearful children that you will take care of them
- Let them have some control such as choosing what they wear or eat
- Make sure they are getting plenty of exercise, rest and eating healthy
- Let child help develop plans for present or future activities
- Spend extra time with the child such as at bedtime
- Take care of your own needs

### Activities for Children

- Draw or paint pictures of how they feel about their experience
- Write a story about the frightening event
- Use play dough or clay to release tension and be creative
- Create music to help relieve stress and tension
- Make puppets and put on a show for family and friends



**If you feel your loved ones are experiencing mental health problems, call 713.970.7000**

**Protect your family.  
Protect yourself.  
Be healthy & safe!**

Harris County  
**HCPHES**  
Public Health & Environmental Services  
[www.hcphe.org](http://www.hcphe.org)

  
MENTAL HEALTH · MENTAL RETARDATION  
AUTHORITY OF HARRIS COUNTY  
[www.mhmraofharriscounty.org](http://www.mhmraofharriscounty.org)

National Mental Health Association • 800-969-NMHA (6642) • [www.nmha.org/reassurance](http://www.nmha.org/reassurance)