

Experts agree that it is important for children to be told that their parents and others will love and protect them during difficult times

- Let them participate in any charitable giving or fundraising the family makes
- Let them write a journal
- Let them send cards or emails
- Let them express their feelings in drawings and art
- Spend more time communicating with your child.

Helpful resources

Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

NSW Health 1800 201 123

Counselling Parent Line 13 22 89

Seasons For Growth - a peer support program about change and loss for children, adolescents and adults. Contact NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief 6882 9222

Victorian Parent Centre - www.vicparenting.com.au

Disaster and Coping www.criminology.unimelb.edu.au/ptsd/disaster.html

The Child Trauma Academy - www.childtrauma.org

Contact Us

Head Office:

7 Welchman Street, Dubbo, NSW 2830
(PO Box 379)

Phone: 02 6882 9222

Fax: 02 6884 9100

Email: contact@nalag.org.au

Web: www.nalag.org.au

Telephone Grief Support Line

Call 02 9489 6644* (*Call costs will apply)

NALAG Centres & Branches (NSW)

NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief DUBBO
(Same as Head Office)

NALAG Centre for Loss & Grief MUDGEE
107 Mortimer Street Mudgee, NSW 2850
Phone: 0488 225 710
Email: mudgee@nalag.org.au

**NALAG Bellingen/Nambucca Shires
MIINDALA Branch**
Mobile: 0448 084 792
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NALAG Sydney Grief Support Telephone Service
Phone: 02 9489 6644
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Email: griefsupport@live.com.au

NALAG NSW Inc
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Helping Children after a Disaster

Helping children after a disaster

The child's response is different from an adults.

Though children have the same sorts of feelings as adults they show them differently. Emotional states may come and go. It is important to let your child know that these feelings are OK.

Children often express their feelings through their behaviour, play and even drawings.

Adults should not be alarmed if children act out disaster scenes or draw them. They may talk to their toys or imaginary friends about their sadness. This is a way for them to make meaning out of what has happened.

Children are curious and are searching for explanations. How did this happen? Often the grief is acted out in bad behaviour. It is helpful to give firm non-punitive disciplinary guidelines, this will help to support the child through the chaos of emotions.

Children absorb concepts about grief very slowly and a little at a time. It is normal for a child to be sad for a little while, then go outside and happily play. They may ask questions over and over, even for weeks or months, or they may hide their feelings, often to protect adults from further pain.

Children sense the emotion around them, react to body language and overheard conversations and television news. We want to protect children but it is not helpful to exclude or isolate them by not talking about death or disasters.

Children's fantasies can be much worse than reality.

Helping the child through trauma

The way in which you talk to your children about distressing situations can teach them a lot about how to cope with negative things that happen in the world.

- Do not force discussion of the traumatic event
- Try not to make the discussion too detailed. Children are often happy with a few details and will come back later for more information.
- If your child wants to discuss a disaster, check on their understanding of what they have seen and heard. Sometimes what they are concerned about is not what you might expect. Use words and concepts they understand
- When talking about traumatic events, give children simple, factual information. Avoid describing in images that can take hold of their imagination
- Point out how rare such events are, and how people dealt with them in the past
- Keep communicating, talk about what is happening, this prevents children from feeling alone, isolated and misunderstood
- Reassure them they are safe and cared for
- Allow expressions of emotions - they are part of the healing process
- Do some fun things as a family.

Helping the child through grief...

- Get back a regular household routine as soon as possible.

- Let the child know he/she is safe and protected.
- Try to understand the child's behaviour. Sometimes he/she does not have the words to express grief.
- Involve the child in a ceremony to say goodbye.
- Talk about bad dreams.
- Let the child help you in an age appropriate way.
- Look together at photos of the person who has died.
- Give the child a memento of the person who has died.
- Let the school know about the death.
- Don't lean on the child for comfort and support. Let the child stay a child.

These suggestions also apply to grief experienced after divorce, death of a pet, moving house / school, losses after bushfires, storms etc.

Helping children after a disaster

- Limit children's viewing of TV news about disasters to prevent them from becoming more distressed
- Talk about it if they need to talk about it
- Keep their days normal
- Keep their activities normal
- Let them know they are safe and secure.