

Helping Children Cope with the Aftermath of Hurricane Isabel

Dealing with the aftermath of a disaster is extremely difficult. It can be especially difficult for children who might not completely comprehend what is happening or haven't yet developed the perspective to understand that things will get better. While Hurricane Isabel has caused significant damage throughout the Western Tidewater communities, it is evident that dealing with the emotional stress following a disaster can continue to be upsetting, frightening, and traumatic for some time. Sadness, fear, anger, and guilt are normal reactions of children.

This brochure can help you learn to recognize the effects of stress in children after a disaster, and offer some simple things you can do to help and begin a family journey towards healing.

Remember, some things that may be traumatic to one child, may not affect another. If something bothers your child lot, it doesn't mean there is something wrong with them. Children respond to disasters very differently depending on their age and experience. It is important to provide extra love and support to children following a disaster.

Examples of post disaster stress in children

- Sadness or crying
- Symptoms of physical illness
- Fear that the disaster will happen again
- Reluctance to go to school
- Fear of darkness, being alone, or being separated from parents or other important adults
- Loss of trust in adults and fear of strangers
- Guilt that they somehow caused the event because of something they said or did
- Changes in behavior (from outgoing to shy or from quiet and well-behaved to noise and aggressive)
- Lapses into younger behavior (such as bed wetting or thumb-sucking)

How to help your children

- Provide children with opportunities to talk about the hurricane
- Encourage children to express their concerns through play and other creative means
- Answer questions honestly and in an age appropriate manner
- Monitor children's exposure to the media
- Keep family routines as normal as possible
- Take care of your own needs so that you are better able to attend to your children's needs
- Reassure children that you will do what you can to keep them safe
- Help children identify the positive aspects that come with the recovery efforts, such as, heroic actions, families being reunited, and the coming together of the community

Hurricane Assistance

The following resources may help your family recover from the effects of Hurricane Isabel

FEMA: 1-800-621-FEMA
TTY/TDD: 1-800-462-7585

Food / Shelter Resources

Department of Social Services:
757-923-3000 Suffolk
757-562-8520 Franklin
757-653-3080 Southampton
757-365-0880 Isle of Wight
Salvation Army: 757-539-5201
United Way First Call: 757-625-4543

Disaster Recovery Centers

National Guard Armory
2761 Godwin Blvd, Suffolk, VA
YMCA
259 James St., Smithfield, VA

Information and Referral
Project Rebound Disaster Crisis Counseling: 757-925-2340
Western Tidewater CSB
Emergency/Crisis: 757-925-2484

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Project Rebound

A Disaster Crisis Counseling Program of the Western Tidewater Community Services Board
Funded by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency

Telephone: (757) 925-2340
Fax: (757) 925-1515

Serving the cities of Suffolk and Franklin and the counties of Isle of Wight and Southampton

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Western Tidewater Community Services Board