

YOUTH STRONG

**HELPING YOUTH AND FAMILIES IN
TIMES OF DISASTER AND STRESS**



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We dedicate this book to all youth-serving professionals, who work tirelessly to provide a solid foundation so that all youth have opportunities to thrive.

Thank you for all you do!

Table of Contents

I. Introductory Section

How To Use This Guide	4
Understanding Disasters And Stress.....	5
Talking With Youth About Stress And Mental Health	6
Tips For Self-Care	7

II. Understanding Youths' Responses To A Disaster

Topic 1. Understanding How Youth Feel	8
Topic 2. Tips For Talking With Youth About Feelings	10

III. Strategies Useful For All Youth

Topic 3. Stay Connected & Supported	12
Topic 4. Focus On Positive Ways To Cope.....	14
Topic 5. Keep A Routine	16
Topic 6. Reduce Media Exposure	18
Topic 7. Stay Healthy & Fit	20
Topic 8. Stay Positive & Give Thanks.....	22
Topic 9. Stay Relaxed	24

IV. Helpful Coping Strategies For Specific Situations

Topic 10. Coping With Fears And Worries: What Do You Worry About?	26
• Strategies For Overcoming Fears And Worries.....	28
Topic 11. Coping With Angry Feelings	30
Topic 12. Coping With Sadness And Loss.....	32

V. Additional Resources And Information

When Do Normal Feelings Of Sadness Become A Problem?	34
Seeking Help For Children At Risk	35
Reliable Resources	37
References	38
Additional Helpful Websites.....	39
Our Coping Plan	40
Disaster Kit Word Search	41
People In My Life Circle.....	42

How To Use This Guide

Dear Parent or Caring Adult,

Although a disaster or other major disruptive event may last for a short period of time, its effects can last for months or even years. In the aftermath of such an event, many adults express concerns about how it might affect youth. Common questions are: “What should I tell youth?” “How can I tell if these events are bothering youth?” “What can I do to help youth cope positively?” This book is designed to help adults address these questions.

Youth and adults’ reactions to a disaster or other major stressful event will vary depending in part on how much they were directly affected by it. Because of this, some adults and youth may be more interested in the materials in this book than others. We suggest you:

- **Read the book first** before choosing which topics and activities to do with youth.
- **Evaluate your own stress level** before beginning work on this book. If you feel you are having difficulty with stress, talk with another adult before working on this book.
- **Take care of yourself.** In order to support youth, please take care of yourself. Use some of the tips in this book to help yourself. All adults need a break from dealing with the many stressors in their lives.

This book contains activities that parents, guardians, and other caring adults can do together with youth. The activities are appropriate for youth ages 6 to 12 years, but may be adapted for older or younger youth as well. We encourage you to adjust the activities and their pace to the youth you are working with. Younger youth may need extra help from an adult and may prefer to complete some activities by drawing rather than by writing. Younger or active youth may also prefer working on one topic at a time; others may be able to complete two or more topics in one sitting.

There are 12 Topics covered in this book. For most topics there is an “Adult Page” on the left and a “Youth Page” on the right. Some Adult pages have “Joint Activities” for adults and youth to complete together. Keep in mind that it is not necessary to cover every topic or complete every activity. Everyone reacts differently to a situation, and some youth prefer to seek out more information than others. Although this book has been written in a suggested sequence, it is okay to skip ahead if you feel a section may be particularly helpful for the youth you are working with.

Each Adult Page has instructions and activities for adults -



Each Youth Page contains parallel information and activities for youth -



Section I contains information on understanding and talking about disasters and stress with youth and tips for adult self-care. Section II will help you understand youths’ thoughts and feelings. Section III covers coping skills that are helpful for most youth. Section IV contains information to help youth with difficult situations or feelings. Section V contains additional important information, strategies, and resources for assistance.

We hope that this material will provide some support for you, your family, and the youth you are working with.

With our best wishes,

Annette La Greca Scott Sevin



Understanding Disasters And Stress

A disaster is a large-scale event that causes a great loss of life or substantial destruction to property, infrastructure, or the environment. Disasters can be natural (e.g., floods, tornadoes) or human-made (e.g., terrorist attacks, oil spills). Disasters are scary and very stressful events for anyone involved. The hardships and disruptions that occur can take a physical and mental toll. It is important to attend to youths' physical and psychological needs after a disaster. Youth may not understand what a disaster means for them. Often, dealing with stress and other psychological effects are the most challenging long-term effects of a disaster.

While disasters can be a significant source of stress, they are not the only events that cause stress. Youth can also experience other major life events that are stressful or even traumatic – such as being in a really bad accident, losing a loved one, witnessing a shooting, or having a life-threatening illness, to name a few. In fact, more than two thirds of youth report experiencing at least one potentially traumatic event by age 16 (source: SAMHSA). To cope, youth will have to find positive ways to deal with their stress reactions.

What is Stress?

Stress is **any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain**. Stress is your body's response to anything that requires attention or action. It affects both the brain and body. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way a person responds to stress, however, makes a big difference in their overall well-being.



Some Common Signs Of Stress Include:

- Fear, worry, inability to relax.
- Disturbance in sleep patterns.
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Increased alcohol, tobacco, and drug use.
- Increased heart rate, difficult breathing.
- Change in eating patterns.
- Worsening health (physical and mental).
- Nausea, stomachache.

After a disaster or other major life event, it is not uncommon for youth to experience some stress reactions. A little bit of stress is good for people to protect themselves. But too much stress can be overwhelming. Learning how to cope with stress is important for mental and physical wellbeing.

JOINT ACTIVITY: What Are My Stressors?

Help youth identify stressors affecting them now, so you can help them focus on relevant coping strategies. Below are some events that are stressful to youth. Review and discuss them with the youth you are working with. You can add additional words or topics that you feel are appropriate.

Tornado	Rejection	Failing a test	Losing a family member
Flood	Illness	Changing schools	Losing a friend
Fire	Being bullied	Losing a pet	Parents divorcing
Earthquake	Being picked on	Being injured	Having to go to the hospital
COVID-19	Cyber bullying	Parent getting sick	Moving (new home/school)



Talking With Youth About Stress And Mental Health

It is important for adults to occasionally check in with youth to see how they are doing, especially when a disaster or other stressful event occurs. This means having a number of discussions over time. It is best to have these conversations regularly, even when things are “okay.” This way, if a disaster or other stressful event occurs, you will already have an established way of discussing feelings and other topics together.

Many adults express concerns over how best to approach conversations with youth about stress or mental health. While the topics may change over time and some conversations may be easier to have than others, all parents, caregivers, and other adults can benefit from the following tips:

- Check your own stress level before talking with a youth. If you are not okay, wait until you have your own emotions and feelings under control before starting a discussion. Youth take cues from adults. If you are overly worried or fearful, the youth will pick up on these emotions and become more stressed.
- Remain calm, comforting, reassuring, and supportive. What you say and how you say it can help to reduce a youth’s worries.
- Rehearse or practice having a difficult conversation ahead of time with another adult. This way, you can be better prepared when you have that conversation with a youth.
- Have notes handy. Notes can help to guide your conversation.
- Don’t be surprised if a youth’s concerns are different from your own. Be open to hearing what the youth has to say. For example, early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, many adults were focused on safety, while many youth were concerned about how their lives were disrupted (e.g., not able to see friends).

ADULT ACTIVITY: Have A “Talking” Plan

It can be useful to write out a plan about how and when you will talk with youth and what information or events you will share. This will increase the chances that your conversations will go well. A few tips to consider include:

Identify a “talking” location. Identify a place to hold your conversations. Choose a quiet location away from distractions and other people.

Try to have a regular time to talk. This helps youth feel more secure and comfortable in discussing their thoughts and feelings. Look for times when they may be relaxed and ready to share about their day, such as before dinner. Avoid talking right before bedtime, as this can worsen fears and worries.

Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions (How? What? Why?) will help you gain a better understanding of how a youth is feeling and what he or she is thinking about. Ask questions like: “*How has your day been?*” or “*What’s on your mind today?*”



Tips For Self Care

Taking care of your own emotional needs is an important part of caring for others. After all, if you are not doing okay, you can't be there to help others, including youth who may need some extra support. For example, in an airplane emergency, adults are instructed to put on their oxygen masks before placing one over a youth sitting next to them. This is to ensure that the adults will be strong and able to help, if needed. The same idea applies when a disaster or other stressful event occurs. The better you care for yourself, the better you will be able to provide for others.

There are many ideas for adult self care. In fact, many of the activities in this book also apply to adults. These principles include:

1. Establishing a regular routine.
2. Staying connected with loved ones and friends who care about you and support you.
3. Limiting exposure to distressing news and social media coverage of disturbing events.
4. Staying healthy by eating nutritious foods and sleeping well.
5. Engaging in regular exercise (which also helps to reduce anxiety and feeling "down").
6. Keeping a positive outlook (remind yourself that you are strong, need to be patient, and will eventually get over this crisis).
7. Practicing relaxation and/or mindfulness.

Some additional ideas include:

8. Having a "me time" in your daily schedule. Take a break from work and others at home to do something you enjoy or find relaxing, such as reading a book, taking a bath, calling a friend, working on a hobby, playing a game, etc.
9. Saying "no" to additional family or work obligations, if you can.
10. Practicing yoga, deep breathing, or other calming exercises.
11. Contacting a mental health professional if you feel overly stressed, upset, or worried.

It is okay to take a break and have time for yourself. Everyone needs their own space – including parents and other caregivers! Remember to occasionally take a break for yourself, so you are able to take care of others.

Some Resources For Self Care:

Psych Central

What Self-Care Is - And What It Isn't, by Elizabeth Pratt

<https://psychcentral.com/blog/what-self-care-is-and-what-it-isnt-2/>

Psychology Today

25 Simple Self Care Tools for Parents, by Erin Leyba, LCSW, Ph.D.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/joyful-parenting/201708/25-simple-self-care-tools-parents>



Understanding How Youth Feel

Disasters and other stressful events affect people in different ways. Life history, personality, and individual experiences during and after the event all shape a person's response. Because some people will be more affected than others, reactions to a disaster or other stressful event may differ greatly from one person to the next.

Stressful events often bring strong feelings and mixed emotions. As time passes, a person's feelings about the event may change. There may also be days and times when they feel better than others. This is normal for people who experience a disaster or other stressful event.

Importance Of Asking Youth How They Feel

It is important to understand how youth are feeling in order to know how to help them. The best way to do this is to talk with a youth directly to learn about his or her thoughts and feelings. Research conducted after previous disasters shows that parents, teachers, and other caregivers are often surprised by how much a youth was affected. There can be many reasons for this. During one study (by La Greca and colleagues, 1996), youth said that they did not tell their parents or other adults about their true feelings because they noticed the adults were already upset and they didn't want to upset them further. Research also shows that parents are often not good observers of their youth's post-disaster reactions. This is another reason why it is important to talk with youth directly about their thoughts and feelings.

The activities in this section will help you understand how you and the youth you are working with are feeling about a disaster or other stressful event. They will also help you open up a conversation about feelings with a youth. It is a good idea to keep the lines of communication open and occasionally repeat these activities, as a youth's feelings may change over time.

The next page has open-ended sentences for youth to complete that will help them talk about their day and their feelings. You can copy the page and have the youth keep a daily journal. Each day, review the youth's answers and talk about what he or she wrote.

Adult Activity: How Do You Feel?

How do you feel about a recent disaster or other stressful event? Write your feelings in the columns below. How have your feelings changed since the event first happened? What has stayed the same? If there are any strong emotions you have that you feel uncomfortable with, such as a lot of anger, fear, or sadness, it may help to talk to someone about them.

How I felt when the event happened

How I feel now



How I Feel Today

How are you feeling today? Below are some sentences that will help you tell about your day and how you are feeling. Finish the sentences as best you can. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers.

My Name: _____

Today's Date: _____



Today, I feel _____

The best thing that happened to me today was _____

The thing that bothered me the most today was _____

Today, I relaxed by _____

What I thought about most today was _____

Tomorrow, I want to _____



Tips For Talking With Youth About Feelings

It is important to keep the “lines of communication” open in order to understand how a youth is reacting to stressful events. This means creating a comfortable time and place for a youth to talk about feelings or worries. It will help to pick a quiet place to talk, away from distractions. Also, try to have a regular time to talk, such as before dinner or after school. Talking before bedtime is not a good idea because youth may have trouble sleeping after discussing upsetting events.

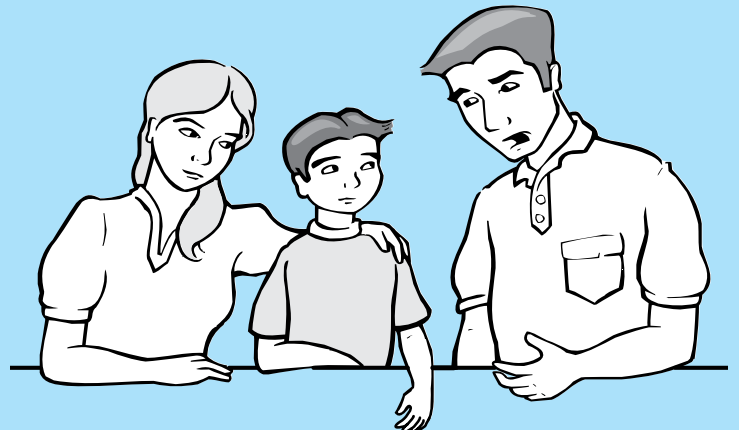
The guidelines on this page will help you identify how the youth you work with feel and the focus of their concerns. Remember to be “calm and collected” before starting a conversation. If you are having trouble with your own feelings, speak with another adult first.

Some Guidelines For Talking With Youth:

- Listen to the youth’s feelings rather than controlling the conversation yourself.
- Youth often view the world differently from adults. Acknowledge the youth’s perspectives by saying things like: *“I know it’s been hard...[to miss your friends, miss out on your favorite activities, etc.].”*
- Normalize a youth’s statements by making comments like these:
“It’s okay to feel that way.” “It sounds like you are scared.” “That part made you feel sad.”
- Be neutral. Do not judge or criticize. Make comments like these:
“That’s interesting.” “Tell me more about it.” “What do you mean?”
- It’s okay to say *“I don’t know”* if you are asked a question you cannot answer.
- Express your own feelings but avoid alarming or upsetting the youth you are working with.
- Pay attention to behaviors that show strong feelings, such as:
 - Fidgeting or squirming.
 - Poor eye contact (doesn’t look at you while talking).
 - Facial expressions that show anger, sadness, or worry.
- Keep in mind that listening is a good way of showing emotional support. Research shows that youth with greater emotional support after disasters report less stress (La Greca et al., 2010).

JOINT ACTIVITY: Talk About A Stressful Event

On the next page are activities that will help a youth communicate their feelings about a recent stressful event. After they have completed the page, go over the youth’s responses together and talk about them. Use the guidelines above when having the conversation. It is a good idea to periodically repeat these activities to see how the youth is feeling over time, especially if any new stressful events occur.





How I Feel About A Stressful Event

When a stressful event happens, people have many different feelings. Some feelings may change over time. What is a recent stressful event that happened to you? Complete the activities below to describe the event and how you feel about it.

1. My recent stressful event is: _____

2. Below are pictures and words that describe how some people feel after a stressful event. Circle the faces or create new ones to show how you feel about your recent stressful event. You can circle more than one.



SURPRISED



WORRIED



SCARED



ANGRY



CONFUSED



CONFIDENT



CURIOUS



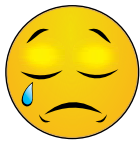
ENRAGED



STRESSED



OPTIMISTIC



SAD



UPSET



FRUSTRATED



HAPPY



HURT



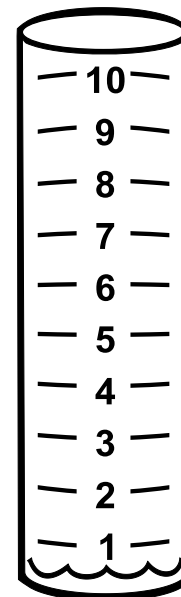
LONELY

3. A rain gauge measures how much rain falls from a storm. Rainwater from a storm gets caught in the rain gauge. As more rain falls, the water reaches a higher number on the scale. The "Stress Gauge" below is like a rain gauge, except it measures feelings of stress instead of water. How stressed or upset are you feeling right now? Read the Stress Gauge first. Then, color in the gauge to the number that best shows how you are feeling. The number 1 means you feel very little stress. The number 10 means you feel a lot of stress and need help.

Too much stress!

A Lot

A Little Bit



Very Much

Some

Not At All



Stay Connected & Supported

Social support from friends and family is a very important part of coping with a disaster or other stressful event. Close family and friends provide the emotional support that is needed to manage challenging stressors. In fact, research consistently shows that social support from family and friends reduces youths' feelings of distress and contributes to their positive physical and mental health. And – family and friends are an important source of fun!

One reason we begin this section of the book with the topic of social support is because social support is central to all the activities that follow. When adults work with youth on the activities in this book, they are building support for the youth.

Staying connected with friends and family often can be challenging after disasters and other life stressors. This is especially true if youth or their friends have to move or attend a new school. During the COVID pandemic, for example, most youths' social contacts were disrupted due to the closing of schools, parks, and recreational activities. Youth missed friends they typically see during or after school. This means adults need to be creative in finding ways for youth to stay connected with friends and family! This section has some suggestions for ways youth can stay connected with important people in their lives.

- Talk on the phone.
- Send a text message to say “hi” or send a joke or photo to let someone know you are thinking of them.
- Connect to friends or family via videoconferencing.
- Write a letter or make a video to send to family or friends who live far away.
- Plan activities to do with others.
- Join a sports team, club, or organized activity (dance, swimming) that you like.

If it is not possible to connect with family or friends in person, there are many ways to connect virtually. Smart devices like tablets and phones have free apps that can be used to connect with others. Once connected, youth can participate in fun social activities together with friends and family, such as watching a movie, playing a game, and telling jokes.

Joint Activity: People In My Life

Work with youth to help them identify the important people in their lives and develop a plan for staying connected with these people. On the next page, youth can use the circle to identify people they feel closest to and then answer some questions. Review youths' answers with them and help them develop a plan for staying connected with those who provide them with support – every day, every week and every month.

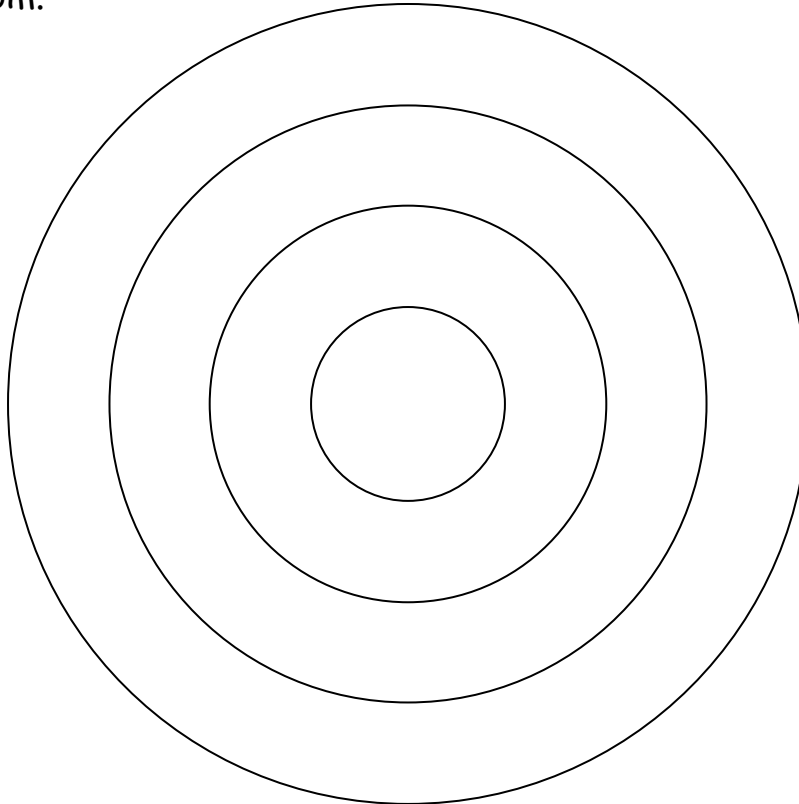
When?	Person	Possible Activities
Everyday	Annette	Text once a day to say hello
Once a week	Dougie	Play a game on Saturday morning
Once a month		



Staying Connected

People In My Life Circle

Identify the important people in your life using the circle below. Write your name in the center. Then add the names of family, friends, pets, teachers, or others who are important to you. Put those that you feel closest to in the circles nearest you. Then answer the questions in the box below. You can use the circle on Page 44 if you need more room.



Questions About The People In My Life:

		Person(s)
1.	Who can you talk to about your feelings?	
2.	Who gives you advice or helps you with problems?	
3.	Who do you want to spend time or have fun with?	
4.	Who helps you feel better when you are down?	
5.	Who do you like to communicate with via texting or other electronic source?	
6.	Who makes you feel accepted for who you are?	



Focus On Positive Ways To Cope

People cope with stress in many ways. Everyone has to find ways that work best for them. Some ways of coping are more effective than others. For example, positive ways to cope with stressful events include talking about how you feel, solving problems, trying to remain calm, and trying to look at the positive side of things.

Some ways of coping are not helpful and can cause more harm than good. Yelling, getting angry, and blaming others are all examples of unhelpful ways to cope. These ways of coping can lead to new problems. Youth who use unhelpful ways of coping with stress tend to have more difficulty dealing with their reactions to disasters and other traumatic events. It is important to recognize when youth are doing something unhelpful and instead help them find better ways to deal with things.

The questions on the next page reveal how youth cope with stress. Use the answer key below to understand how a youth responds to stress. Although you may not always know what specific life events are upsetting, it is always helpful to encourage youth to use positive coping strategies.

Some Positive Coping Strategies

- Maintain a normal routine.
- Talk with friends/family/coworkers.
- Take up a new hobby.
- Exercise/stay physically healthy.
- Get some rest/practice relaxation.
- Reduce exposure to news/social media.
- Write about thoughts and experiences.
- Listen to soothing, calming music.
- Watch a favorite movie or show.
- Look at the positive side of things.
- Talk to a counselor/join a support group.

Adult Activity: Identifying How You Cope

Youth often learn coping strategies from adults. Therefore, it will be useful to identify the ways you cope with stress. On a separate sheet of paper, write down how you cope with a disaster or other stressful event. How do you react when you feel angry, scared, or upset? You can use the items on the next page to identify the ways you cope. If you use unhelpful ways, try to use some of the positive strategies in this book instead. You can model these positive strategies for youth, as it will encourage them to cope in a more positive way.

Answer Key For Youth's Coping Test (see next page)

Positive Strategies: <i>(Focus youth on these)</i>	Negative Strategies: <i>(Have youth avoid these)</i>
Keeping a positive outlook (see #3)	Withdrawing from others (see #1, #2)
Problem solving (see # 6)	Blaming themselves or others (see #4, #5)
Keeping calm (see #9)	Wishful thinking (see #7)
Seeking support from others (see #12)	Angry feelings (see #8, #11)
Distraction (see #13)	Feeling helpless (see #10)



How I Cope With Things That Happen

Here is a list of things that people do to solve problems or to feel better when bad things happen. Think about what you do to feel better when something bad or stressful happens. Circle YES or NO to tell if you do the things listed in each sentence.

	<u>Do you do this?</u>	
1. I stay by myself.	YES	NO
2. I keep quiet about the bad things that happen.	YES	NO
3. I try to see the good side of things.	YES	NO
4. I blame myself for causing the bad event to happen.	YES	NO
5. I blame someone else for causing the bad event to happen.	YES	NO
6. I try to fix the bad things by doing something or talking to someone.	YES	NO
7. I always wish the bad things had never happened.	YES	NO
8. I yell, scream, or get mad.	YES	NO
9. I try to calm myself down.	YES	NO
10. I don't do anything because the bad things can't be fixed.	YES	NO
11. I get mad or angry at others.	YES	NO
12. I try to feel better by spending time with my family, other grownups, or friends.	YES	NO
13. I try to stay busy and keep my mind off things that are upsetting.	YES	NO

(Adapted from the KIDCOPE with permission of Anthony Spirito from: A., Stark, L.J., & Williams, C. (1988). Development of a brief checklist to assess in coping in pediatric patients. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, 13, 555-574.)



Keep A Routine

One of the most upsetting aspects of disasters and other stressful events is the unpredictable disruption to everyday life. Normal activities and routines provide youth and adults with a sense of comfort and control, as their days are more predictable. If these activities and routines are changed or disrupted, they can shake a person's feelings of safety and security. This section helps adults and youth develop a new routine if their life has been disrupted. However, *this section may not be needed if there has been no disruption to everyday routines.*

Everyday activities and routines may be disrupted for a long period of time after a disaster or stressful life event occurs. For example, after a disaster, schools may close, power may be out, and extracurricular activities such as dance classes or sports may be cancelled. Further, youth – or their family or friends – may move away. To cope with these life disruptions, it helps youth to establish a new routine. It also will be important to review and adjust the routine whenever there is another life disruption.

Use the form on the next page. First, youth identify their typical routine on the left side of the paper. Youth can complete the form for both a typical weekday and weekend routine, as these routines usually differ. For young children, this task may be done as a joint activity with an adult. Next, work with youth on the Joint Activity below to create a new routine to follow when a disaster or other stressful event occurs. You can adjust this routine as things change over time.

Adult Activity: Identify Your Normal Routines

In times of stress, it is important that you monitor your own routines. Over the next few weeks, keep track of your day. On a sheet of paper, write down each activity you do and the amount of time you spend doing it. Break down your activities into the following categories: Home, Family, Friends, Work, and Self. At the end of each week, calculate the total amount of time spent in each category. You may find that you need to have more time to yourself. If so, adjust your routines and make extra time to relax, spend with a friend or loved one, or have more fun. If you feel relaxed and in control, you will be better able to cope with your own concerns and assist others with theirs.

	Home	Family	Friends	Work	Self
Mon					
Tues					
Wed					
Thurs					
Fri					
Sat					
Sun					
Total					

Joint Activity: Create A Routine For Youth

When youths' everyday routines are disrupted, it will help to create a new routine. Review the youth's "typical" routine on the left side of the next page. Then, together with the youth, come up with a new routine to follow. Write this plan on the right side of the page. Be creative and develop a plan that includes elements of the youth's typical routine. For example, youth should wake up and go to bed at the same time each day, have regular "school hours" or study time, and have regular times for meals, exercise, social activities, and fun. If you are a parent or caregiver working with your child, you and your child can also list favorite activities you enjoy doing together and add some of these shared activities to both of your schedules.



My Routines

Most people have a daily routine, which means they do the same things at about the same time each day. For example, you may wake up, go to school, eat lunch, and come home around the same time every day. What is your daily routine? On the left side, write down the things that you normally do and the times that you usually do them.

When a disaster or other big stressful event happens, many people change their daily routines. Maybe your routine has recently changed. If so, work with an adult to create a routine that you can do now. Be sure to include times for waking up, meals, schoolwork, having fun or relaxing, talking with friends or family, and bedtime. Then, write this new routine on the right side of the page.

My Regular Routine

Time

Activity

In the morning:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In the afternoon:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In the evening:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Before bedtime:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

My New Routine

Time

Activity

In the morning:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In the afternoon:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

In the evening:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Before bedtime:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



Reduce Media Exposure

You can help youth cope with disasters and other major life stressors by reducing their exposure to upsetting news and images. Research shows that youth who view upsetting images of traumatic events (e.g., people dying, disaster victims) report more distress than who do not view such images. This is because visual images are a way of experiencing a traumatic event. Disturbing visual images can lead to increased fears, worries, bad dreams, and trouble sleeping. Also, limiting use of social media can help because a lot of misinformation (such as fake news) spreads that way.

Help youth avoid media images that can be upsetting. Limit youths' viewing of news programs on TV or of photos and videos on the Internet. Limit their social media use as well. In particular, limit programs or websites with images of sick people, death and destruction, or stories about families who were separated or hurt by a harmful event.

Prepare vs. Scare

Many news stations and websites report events in a dramatic and sometimes scary way. One way to reduce stress is to turn the television or computer off once you and your family have the information you need. Too much viewing will scare (and create fears and worries), rather than prepare.

Adult Activity: Develop Your Own Media Viewing Guide

Develop a plan to promote positive viewing habits. This will help limit youths' exposure to upsetting pictures or videos. Follow these rules:

LIMIT – the amount of time youth watch television or surf the Internet unattended. Choose ahead how much time youth can watch TV or use the computer or smart phone each day. Limit your own time as well to set a good example. Use parental settings on devices whenever possible.

PLAN – with youth, in advance, what TV programs to watch or which websites to visit. Use school or parental control features to restrict access to certain cable channels, television programs, or websites. Turn off electronics when time is up.

PARTICIPATE – in watching TV programs or surfing the internet with youth. You can occasionally ask if there is anything they have questions about or that bothers them. Turn a program off if it becomes upsetting and talk about it.

ENCOURAGE – youth to engage in other fun activities like reading, exercise, or a hobby. Have some non-electronic games or activities available (puzzles, board games, etc.). These activities provide a distraction from upsetting events and can help youth feel more in control.

Joint Activity: Try Something New

It is important to stay informed as to what is happening, especially during or after a disaster. But do not spend a lot of time watching crisis information on TV or on the Internet. Also, be careful of rumors and misinformation that is spread through social media. It can add to already high stress levels. You have to find a balance. As an alternative, use the time to learn a new skill or try something you have always wanted to do but didn't have time for before. For example, learn a new language, try a new recipe, or start a new hobby. Review youths' responses from the next page and help them choose one or two things from their "favorite activities list" to try. Then, together, think of a fun activity you can do together. Add this to your weekly routine.



What I Like To Do



My Favorite Things:

What are some of your favorite things? List your favorites for each category below.

My favorite hobbies are:

My favorite sports are:

My favorite family activities are:

My favorite games are:

My favorite foods are:



Find A New Favorite Activity

It can be very fun and rewarding to try something new. Is there something you have wanted to learn or do? For example, during the COVID pandemic, some people learned to play a new musical instrument. Others learned to speak a new language or learned a new skill, like a magic trick or card trick. What are some new things you are interested in? Write these below. Afterwards, see if you can add one or two to your routine on Page 17.

Things I Want to Try or Learn:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.



Stay Healthy & Fit

Stress affects everyone both physically and mentally. During and after a stressful event, it is common to have trouble sleeping or not feel like eating. These changes make it hard to cope with stress and can also weaken a person's immune system. Research shows that exercise, staying active, eating nutritious food, and getting a good night's sleep are important ways for youth and adults to cope with stress.

The activities in this section will help you identify youths' eating, sleeping, and exercise habits. They are also designed to help improve youths' overall health and physical condition.

Adult Activity: Track Youth's Health

This joint activity is focused on parents/caregivers. For other adults working with youth, you might ask youth to keep track of their behaviors in these categories for a few days.

Observe youth over the next few days. Note any health behaviors that are a problem. Write down any problems you notice in the following categories: Eating, Sleeping, Exercise, and Physical Complaints. If there are areas that need improvement, work with the youth to create a "Helpful Health Chart" that includes things they can do to be healthier. Some examples are:

Helpful Health Chart

<u>Eating:</u> Eat green vegetables. Eat healthy snacks (raisins, carrots). Eat a favorite food as a treat. Take vitamins.	<u>Sleeping:</u> Sleep in a cool, dark room. No electronics/phone before bed. Play soft music before bedtime. Read or count backwards from 100. Same wake-up and bedtime each day.
<u>Exercise:</u> Learn a new exercise. Take a walk every day. Develop an exercise routine.	<u>Physical Complaints:</u> Talk with a family doctor/school nurse. Practice a relaxation exercise to reduce stress.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Create A Weekly Exercise Routine

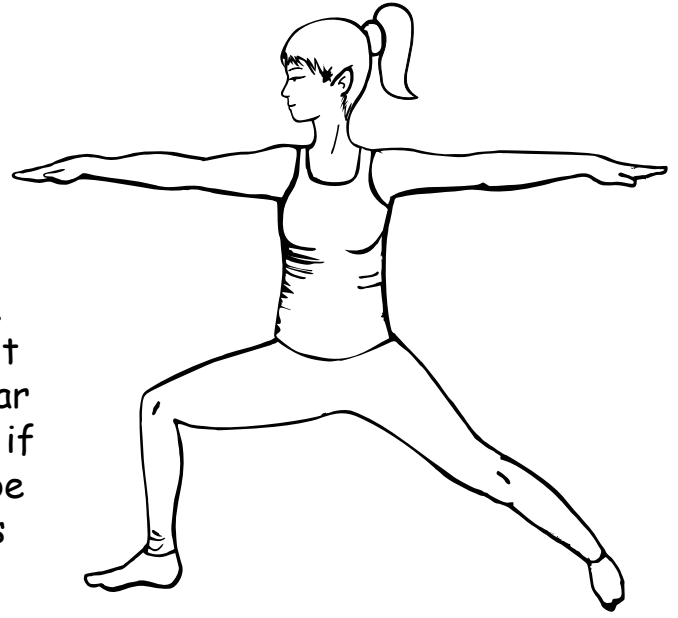


Exercise helps to reduce stress and feelings of anxiety and sadness. Unfortunately, when a disaster or other stressful life event occurs, it can be hard for people to maintain their normal exercise routine. Work with youth to identify an exercise routine they can do now. On the next page is an exercise chart to keep track of weekly exercise. Help youth to identify exercises and set up their weekly exercise routine. Find ways to reward youth each week when they complete their daily exercise routine! If a disaster or other major life event occurs, work with youth to find a new, temporary exercise routine they can do.



Stay Healthy - Stay Fit

You can deal better with things that bother you when you are healthy and fit. Getting exercise is an important way to stay healthy. Below is a chart for you to keep track of your weekly exercise. Talk with an adult to decide what exercises to do. Write the different exercises on the left side of the chart. Then, give yourself a star for each day you complete an exercise. See if you can find a friend or family member to be your exercise buddy and do these exercises with you! When the week is over, add up the number of stars to see how you do!



My Weekly Exercise Routine

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Exercise 1							
Exercise 2							
Exercise 3							
Exercise 4							
Exercise 5							
Exercise 6							
Exercise 7							
Exercise 8							
Weekly Total							



Stay Positive & Give Thanks

People manage stress better if they have hope and keep a positive attitude. Research shows that positive thinking can even improve your health! The activities in this section help youth cope with stress by maintaining a positive attitude. It also helps if the adults in their lives model positive thinking for them!

JOINT ACTIVITY: See The Bright Side

There are some positive outcomes in every disaster or tragedy. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people learned new skills or worked on some favorite hobbies they wouldn't have had time for otherwise. Together, think about some positives that have come out of the current disaster or stressor you are experiencing. Write these down on a sheet of paper. Help youth identify some positives that may be difficult for them to express, such as feeling closer to a sibling or connecting with other family members.

Positive 1. _____

Positive 2. _____

Positive 3. _____

Positive 4. _____

Positive 5. _____

Giving Thanks

Giving thanks is another positive way to manage stress and cope with feelings. Research shows that “expressing thanks” leads to positive emotions. Expressing thanks or gratitude also teaches youth compassion and kindness. Giving thanks can be done in many ways. For example, after a disaster, youth can write emails or letters or send thank you cards or short videos to those who help with the recovery process. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many youth sent notes of appreciation to medical workers (e.g., doctors, nurses) and first responders (e.g., paramedics) to thank them for their help and support.

For ideas on ways to express thanks, check out:

<http://www.pbs.org/parents/expert-tips-advice/2016/08/raising-grateful-kids-giving-thanks-good-soul/>

JOINT ACTIVITY: Be Thankful Everyday

Giving thanks works best when it is a routine practice. Adults can model “giving thanks” and encourage youth to practice gratitude daily. For example, parents and guardians can share something they are thankful for at dinnertime, bedtime, or any other time they are with their child. Teachers could start a class by modeling “giving thanks” and asking the students to do the same by sharing something they are thankful for. Youth can keep a diary and write down one thing they are thankful for each day. It is even better when youth “share” their thanks with others.



Stay Positive & Give Thanks

When a disaster or something stressful happens, sometimes people focus on all the things that have gone wrong. It is normal to feel angry, disappointed, frustrated, or sad. But it also helps to find ways to focus on the good things that happened.



Pay Attention To The Positives

Identify something positive that happened to you or your family today. It could be anything - like seeing a beautiful sunset, eating a favorite meal, getting a good grade on a test, or visiting a friend. Each day, find some time to think about the day and write down something positive that happened.

Mon: _____

Tue: _____

Wed: _____

Thu: _____

Fri: _____

Sat: _____

Sun: _____

Give Thanks To Others

Something positive happens in our lives every day - thanks to someone else. It may be something very simple, such as someone opening a door for you. Or it can be a friend helping you off the ground when you fall. It can even be a firefighter helping to put a fire out. Each day, think about someone you are thankful for. Then, write about who they are and what they did to make you feel thankful. You can share your thanks by telling that person directly or writing them a thank-you note.

Today I give thanks to _____ for _____.

Today I give thanks to _____ for _____.

Today I give thanks to _____ for _____.

Today I give thanks to _____ for _____.

Today I give thanks to _____ for _____.



Stay Relaxed

Relaxation and deep breathing are helpful stress-management strategies that calm emotions and help people focus in the moment. These strategies are an important part of youth and adult self-care, which is important in times of stress. This section provides some ideas on how to do this.

Relaxation: One helpful self-care technique is called relaxation, where you focus on relaxing all areas of your body, from head to toe. When you let go of tension in your body, your mind can also relax. A relaxed mind can think more clearly. This helps with problem solving, conflict resolution, and overcoming challenges. A relaxed body and calm mind also helps adults and youth cope with stress. The Joint Activity below is a great relaxation activity to try with youth.

Mindfulness: Another self-care strategy that can reduce stress is a practice called mindfulness. Mindfulness allows people to focus on the present moment instead of focusing on the past or the future. This strategy can be particularly helpful when you start to feel overwhelmed. Mindfulness helps you focus on the “here and now” and helps make life’s challenges “bite-sized” and more manageable. The Adult Activity below is an effective mindfulness exercise.

On the next page are activities for youth to try. You can help youth with these activities until they are comfortable doing them on their own. Relaxation and mindfulness techniques take practice. If practiced at least once a day, they can help reduce the effects of stress and help keep youth calm in challenging times.

Adult Activity: Focus On Your Five Senses

Sit or lie down in a comfortable place. Think about 5 things you can see, 4 things you can hear, 3 things you can touch, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. As you think of those things, imagine you are experiencing them. Celebrate the aroma of your favorite food coming out of the oven, the soothing sounds of waves lapping up on a beach, the deep violet and green color of a wildflower, the warmth of soft clothes coming out of a dryer, or the taste of your favorite food on the tip of your tongue. Focusing on your senses can really anchor you in the present and help you to relax in the moment.

JOINT ACTIVITY: Belly Breathing

Sit comfortably in a chair. Close your eyes and relax your body. Place one hand on your chest and the other hand on your belly, just below your ribs. Now, take a deep, long breathe through your nose while slowly counting to 5. Pay attention to your hands. When you inhale, your chest should not move, but your belly should push your hand out. Hold your breath for a second. Then, breathe out slowly through your mouth while counting to 5. Slowly let all the air out. Repeat this process 5 to 10 times. Practice this on your own first. When you feel confident, you can teach youth how to belly breathe. Once you have both learned to belly breathe, it is a lifelong skill you can practice together!

For more mindfulness ideas, see: *25 Fun Mindfulness Activities for Children & Teens*
<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-children-kids-activities/>



Stay Calm & Relaxed

It is normal to feel scared or upset sometimes. When this happens, it can make you feel very uncomfortable. But there are some things you can do to feel better. Here are two great activities to try next time you feel scared or upset.

Pizza Breathing

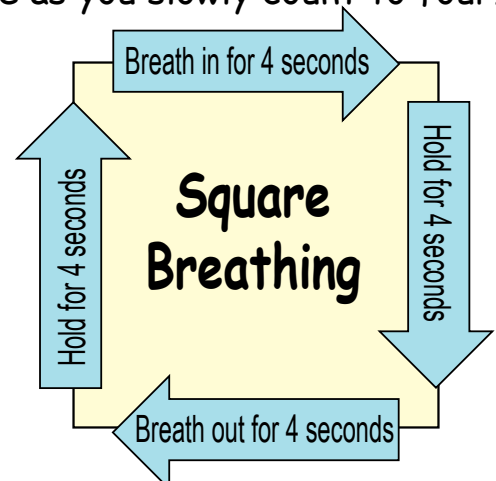
Pizza breathing is a great way to calm yourself down when you are feeling nervous or upset. Here's how to do it:

1. Close your eyes and imagine that a fresh hot pizza just came out of the oven! The cheese is still melting. And it smells soooooooo good!
2. Imagine that a slice of the pizza is placed in front of you.
3. Use your hands to hold the pizza slice up near your nose.
4. Now, slowly take a deep breath in through your nose to smell the pizza. Slowly count to four as you breathe in. Doesn't that pizza smell amazing?
5. Next, slowly blow the air out through your mouth to cool down the pizza. Slowly count to four as you breathe out.
6. Repeat this three or four times or until you feel calmer.

Square Breathing

Another way to relax when you feel scared or upset is to do some square breathing! This is an exercise that even Navy SEALs do! Follow these instructions!

1. Sit in a comfortable position or in a chair with your feet on the floor.
2. Close your eyes and imagine a square box with four equal sides. Each side represents one step of the activity.
3. Start by taking a deep breath in through your nose as you slowly count to four. Feel the air enter your lungs.
4. Now, hold your breath while slowly counting to four again.
5. Next, slowly breathe out through your mouth as you count to four.
6. And finally, hold your breath again while slowly counting to four.
7. Repeat this exercise three or four times or until you feel calmer.





Coping With Fears And Worries: What Do You Worry About?

When stressful events occur, adults and youth often feel fearful and worried. These feelings are common, especially when a disaster or a stressful event disrupts people's lives. These types of events can bring a whole new set of fears and worries that may not have been present before. They also can increase existing fears. It is common for adults and youth to worry about their health and safety, the health and safety of loved ones, and what may happen in the future.

In general, fears and worries are normal. However, if they interfere with activities (e.g., keeping youth from doing schoolwork or interacting with family and friends), then youth will need help in dealing with them. To help youth cope with their worries, you must first understand the kinds of things they worry about. This section is designed to help identify fears and worries.

Since worries can be learned or worsened through viewing TV and other media sources, we have included a section to help reduce media use (see Page 18). You also might find a relaxation exercise helpful (see Page 24). Because youths' worries may change over time, it is a good idea to repeat this section periodically.

Adult Activity – What Are Your Worries?

Youth can “learn” about sources of fear and worry by observing or listening to the adults around them, such as their parents and teachers. Because of this, it will help to identify the things you worry about and that you might unintentionally communicate to others. On a sheet of paper, write down the fears and worries you currently have. You can divide these into topics, such as worries concerning your family, your job, your health, your relationships, and your community. When you are finished, highlight the worries that bother you the most.

FAMILY	WORK / SCHOOL	HEALTH	RELATIONSHIPS	COMMUNITY

Adult Activity – What Do Youth Worry About?

Do you know what youth worry about? Often, adults are surprised by the kinds of things that bother youth or underestimate the degree of their concerns. While the youth you are working with completes the activity on the next page, make a list of the things that you think he or she worries about. Highlight the ones you feel bother them the most. When finished, compare your answers. Which worries did you get correct? Which ones did you miss? Which fears or worries that the youth expressed surprised you, if any?





What Do You Worry About?

Everybody has worries. Sometimes a worry can make you feel upset. This is because you think something bad might happen. For example, you might worry that you will get a bad grade on a test or that you will get a shot when you visit the doctor's office. Below, write down some of your worries that bother you.

Some worries can be very scary and may upset you more than others. To the right of each worry, circle the words that best explains how much that worry bothers you. Circle whether you think about that worry a little bit, sometimes, or a lot of the time.



My Worry

My worry bothers me:

A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot
A little	Sometimes	A lot



Strategies For Overcoming Fears And Worries

Although fears and worries are common and normal, they can become a problem. Learning how to cope with them is important. In general, talking with someone, gradually facing fears, and finding practical solutions are all positive ways of coping with fears and worries.

Talk with someone – Sometimes worries lessen when youth have someone to share them with. You can help by setting up a regular “talk time” to check in and see how a youth is feeling (see Page 6). You can also help identify other “worry friends” a youth can talk with when feeling worried or scared (see activity on Page 29), including people at home (e.g., parents; older siblings), in school (e.g., teachers; school counselors), and in the community (e.g., friends; relatives). Youth can carry a list of these worry friends and contact them if needed. This may help them to feel better.

Face fears gradually – Youth who are able to face fears in a gradual and safe manner often become less fearful. For example, someone who is nervous about a parent leaving the house to buy groceries may become less fearful if a parent leaves and returns home safely on several occasions. Encourage youth to be brave and stay strong; reward them for being courageous and facing fears. Do not reward fears by letting youth avoid school or chores, or by giving in to their wishes because of fears and worries.

Find practical solutions – A worry can often be lessened or overcome by thinking of a practical and simple plan to master that worry. For example, if a youth is worried about starting a new school, try to think of ways to help them cope with this worry. You can take a tour of the school together ahead of time, have a family member drop off and pick up the youth at school, and ask the teacher to assign a “classroom buddy” to help the youth integrate. These simple solutions may help a youth feel better about entering a new school or making new friends.

Joint Activity – Develop A Worry-Buster Plan

Developing a “Worry-Buster” plan can be a fun activity that will help youth cope with their fears and worries. Use some blank note cards or similar sized pieces of paper. On one side, have a youth write down a fear or worry that bothers them (see Youth Activity on Page 27). Then, together, think of positive things that youth can do to “bust that worry” and feel better! Write these helpful ideas on the back of the card. The youth can memorize the cards or carry copies with them. See the example below.



Front (Worry):

I am scared of another storm.

Back (Worry-buster):

- Review strategies for staying safe in a storm.
- Limit viewing of TV/media coverage about storms.
- Talk with a Worry Friend about concerns.



Front (Worry):

I won't be able to see my friends.

Back (Worry-buster):

- Let the youth talk/text their friends on the phone.
- Plan “play dates.”
- Find a TV show/movie the youth and friend can “watch” together.



Coping With Worries

Sometimes worries can be very upsetting. When a worry upsets you, it is important to talk with a parent or other adult about it. Talking about the things that bother you will help you feel better about them. Who can you talk to about your fears or worries? Think of some "worry friends" and list them below. A "worry friend" is someone you trust and can talk to when you feel upset or worried. Choose one or two adults (from home, from your school, and in your community) who can be your "worry friends." Ask a parent or other adult to help you with this activity.

My Worry Friends:

At Home: _____

At School: _____

In The Community: _____

Another way to help you feel better about your worries is to create a Worry-Buster plan. Pick five of the worries you listed on Page 27 that bother you a lot and write them below. Then, with an adult, think of things you can do to beat that worry! Write your plan to **BUST THAT WORRY** on the right side.



My WORRY



My WORRY-BUSTER PLAN

1.

1.

2.

2.

3.

3.

4.

4.

5.

5.



Coping With Angry Feelings

It is not unusual for adults and youth to have angry feelings after a disaster or other stressful life event. People feel stressed because everyday life becomes more difficult. Disruptions may occur for an extended period of time, which can add to already high levels of stress. While things may be frustrating, it is important to find positive ways to deal with angry feelings.

Youth may want to “blame others” for bad things that happen or may just be more irritable than usual. If you work with a youth who is feeling angry or irritable, explain that it is okay to feel that way. This is a very normal feeling. Explain, however, that it is NOT okay to take out angry feelings on other people. For example, it is okay to feel angry, but not okay to fight and argue with others. Also, it is not okay to do something mean to someone else or to an animal.

The activities in this section will help youth manage angry feelings and resolve conflicts with others. They also will help you develop a plan for managing anger.

Adult Activity: Develop An Anger Management Plan

Keep a brief diary of the youth’s behavior over the next few days. Take notes on what happens before, during, and after each angry outburst. Use this to develop an “anger management” plan.

Before – Who does the youth get angry at? What situations trigger the anger?

During – What does the youth do when angry? What is his or her behavior?

After – What happens after? Do you discipline the youth? Do you ignore the behavior?

If the youth gets angry or annoyed at the same person or in the same situation, try changing the situation to prevent the angry outbursts. For example, if the youth gets angry when a sibling changes the television channel, it may help to have family rules about television viewing. You also can have the youth “talk through” angry feelings with the person who is the target.

Also, look at what happens after the youth gets angry. Does the youth get his or her way? Try not to ignore angry behavior or to “give in” to misbehavior. Instead, calmly explain that “feeling angry” is okay, but “acting angry” is not. Have the youth sit quietly until they calm down and then talk over what is bothering them to see if the situation can be resolved. If this doesn’t work, you may have to discipline the youth (miss a favorite TV show, go to bed a half hour earlier, do an extra chore, etc.).

JOINT ACTIVITY: Role Playing

After a youth completes the activities on the following page, go over his or her ideas for helpful things to do when feeling angry. Help identify additional things they can do (e.g., writing, drawing, visiting a calm down area). Then, play a “pretend” game with the youth. You pretend to do something annoying, and the youth has to practice one of the positive things listed in the activity at the bottom of Page 31. Involve other adults or family members as well.



Keep Calm: Manage Your Angry Feelings

Sometimes people may feel angry, irritable, or upset after a disaster or other stressful event. They may feel this way because they have experienced a lot of changes and life may be harder for them and their families.

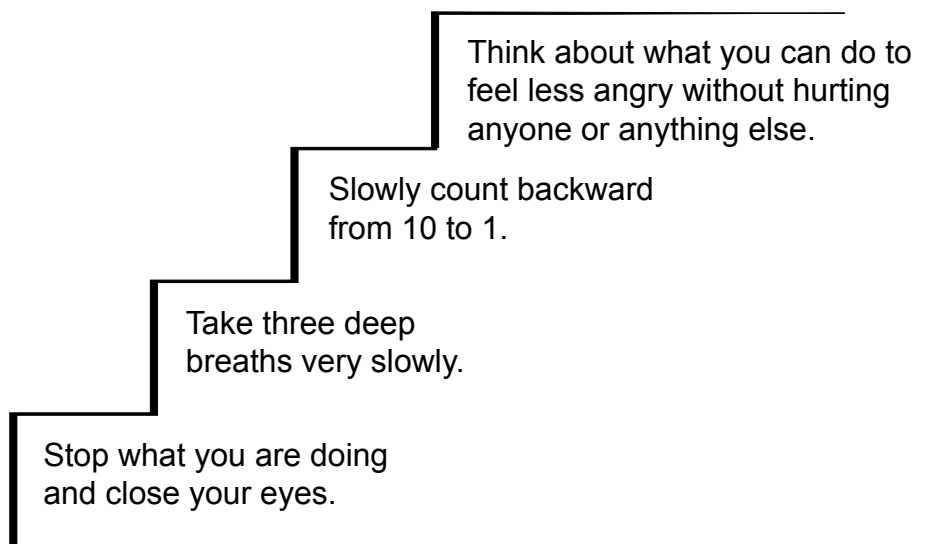
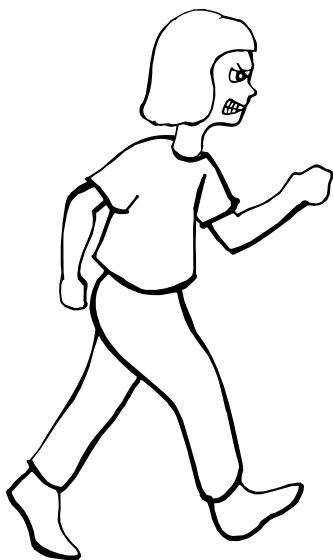
1. Think about a recent stressful event that happened to you. Below, talk about the event and how it has made life harder for you.

Example: I haven't been able to be with my friends.

2. Life may also be harder for your family or friends because of the event. Below, write how you think things are harder for the rest of your family and friends.

Example: My parents have extra work to do now.

Sometimes when bad things happen, people get angry or upset more than normal. It is okay to feel angry, but it is not okay to take your angry feelings out on other people. If you are angry with someone or get into an argument, it will help if you follow these simple steps:



3. On a separate sheet of paper, draw or write about "helpful" things you can do when you feel angry or get into an argument with someone. If you need some ideas, ask an adult for help.



Coping With Sadness And Loss

During and after disasters or stressful events, youth and adults often feel sadness or loss, especially those who had significant changes in their way of life or lost a loved one. Even people who do not lose a loved one or have life changes may still feel sad. People may feel sad for those who lost a friend, family member, job, or business. People also may feel sad because they don't know how to help the situation, because they feel alone, or because things just "aren't the same." The activities in this section will help youth identify and talk about feelings of sadness and loss.

In general, there are some things that can help when youth or adults feel sad:

- Focus on the positive things you have (health, loved ones, friends, etc.) (see Stay Positive & Give Thanks on Page 22).
- Stay connected. Talk with a friend or family member when feeling "blue" (see Stay Connected & Supported on Page 12).
- Stay active by doing things you normally enjoy – even if you don't feel like it.
- Exercise (see Stay Healthy & Fit on Page 20)
- Express gratitude or thanks (see Stay Positive & Give Thanks on Page 22).

JOINT ACTIVITY: Positive Coping Ideas:

Together, complete the activity on the next page. Focusing on the things you did not lose is a helpful way of coping with sadness and loss. Some youth may need help with this activity because some things can be hard to name or draw (e.g., loss of a sense of safety). When the youth is finished, discuss some positive things he or she can do to feel better.



I may have lost some things,
but I still have...

Some additional resources on coping with sadness and loss

Child Mind Institute
Helping Children Cope With Grief
<https://childmind.org/guide/helping-children-cope-grief/>

KidsHealth from Nemours
Coping with Sad Feelings
<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/sadness.html>



1. Write or draw a picture of some of the things you lost because of a disaster or stressful event. (If you lost nothing, draw or write about things other people have lost.)

2. What are some of the things you did not lose during a disaster or stressful event? Draw or write about some of the things you still have. For example, you can write: "I may have lost some things because of the _____, but I still have _____."



When Do Normal Feelings Of Sadness Become A Problem?

Disasters and other major life events are stressful for most people. It may be hard for youth and adults to spend time with friends and family or to do activities they normally enjoy. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and isolation made many people feel sad, uneasy, and, at times, overwhelmed. These feelings are normal reactions to a stressful situation that is challenging and hard to control.

Although feelings of sadness and loss are normal reactions to stress, they can become a problem if they last for a long time or interfere with relationships, schoolwork, or job performance. Also, after a disaster or very stressful event, some youth and adults may feel that the situation is hopeless, or that they don't want to "go on" any more. If any of these things happen to you or to youth you work with, it is important to seek professional advice or counseling to cope with the feelings. Below are some signs of depression that youth (and adults) may show.

Some Signs Of Depression Include:

- Persistent feelings of sadness or depressed mood.
- Irritability (in youth).
- Loss of interest or pleasure in usual activities.
- Fatigue or low energy.
- Change in appetite or weight (increase or decrease).
- Change in sleep (insomnia or too much sleep).
- Difficulty concentrating.
- Feeling worthless.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.
- Feeling helpless or hopeless.

Often the signs to the left are also seen with:

- Frequent physical complaints.
- Difficulties in personal relationships with family or friends.
- Poor school or work performance.
- Social withdrawal.

If feelings last for several weeks or interfere with your daily life, it may help to seek professional advice and counseling. Depression is a serious condition that affects a person's body, moods, and thoughts. Like diabetes or heart disease, depression requires professional treatment. If you think someone may be suffering from depression, encourage them to contact a mental health professional. If left untreated, depression can lead to long-term problems.

For more information on depression, see:

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression/what-is-depression>

**If you or someone you know is having thoughts of
suicide, call the**

National Suicide Prevention LIFELINE:

1-800-273-8255 or dial 988

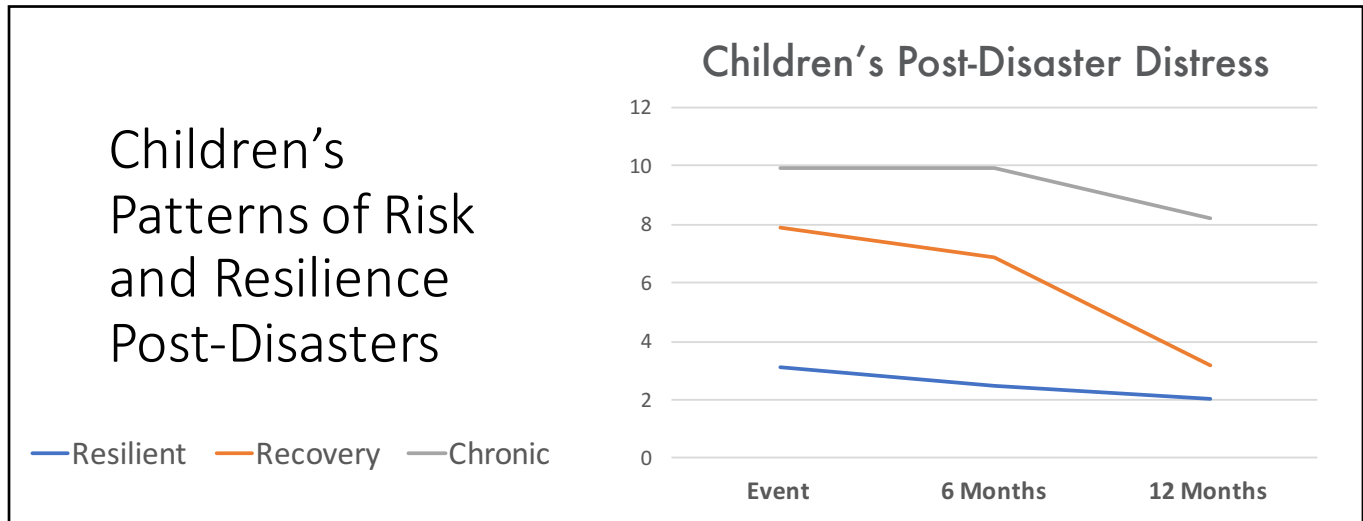


Seeking Help For Children At Risk

Although many youth experience significant stress, most are resilient and will be okay if they have some help and support. Research after many different types of disasters, such as hurricanes, earthquakes, and terrorist events like 9/11, show that the majority of youth who are initially distressed do recover over time (see Bonanno et al., 2010). Also, a small number of youth, typically 20% or less, are at risk for long-term difficulties. These “at risk” youth may need extra help to recover from stressors. In fact, one of the reasons we developed this manual is to help youth get on the path to recovery. Yet, some youth will need more help than this manual can provide.

Youths’ disaster-related distress can be described in one of three ways:

1. Some youth are **resilient**. They might be a bit distressed at times, but are mostly calm, cool, and collected.
2. Other youth may be distressed for a while, but will gradually **recover over time**. This often is the largest group of youth. Even if a youth is distressed, he or she will likely do better over time, especially with support from an adult.
3. Finally, other youth appear **chronically distressed**. They have high distress levels and do not recover much over time. These children can benefit from professional help.



How to tell if youth fit the chronic pattern and need professional help

Youth who fit the chronic pattern (above) have challenges even before a disaster or other stressful event occurs. In general, youth are likely to have chronic problems after a disaster or stressful event if they previously had:

- ***Behavior or learning problems*** (e.g., autism spectrum, ADHD, learning disability): For example, youth with autism may find it very hard to adjust to changes in daily routines and to learn without individual, specialized attention. Youth with ADHD or other learning problems may struggle with schoolwork and with staying “on task” while attending school.
- ***Emotional problems***: Youth who felt anxious or sad even before the disaster or stressful event may find that their fears or sadness have increased.
- ***Little social support***: Such as from friends or family.
- ***Additional major life stressors***: Such as a close family member or friend dying, parental divorce, or conflict in the home.
- ***Poor strategies for regulating emotions***: For example, youth who yell at others or blame themselves (or others) for what happened often have difficulty recovering from stress. These strategies reflect poor emotion regulation and create added stress.



Youth also are at risk for chronic distress if they experience the following because of the disaster/stressful event:

- **Lost a loved one** (family member, friend).
- **Have a parent who is a medical worker, first responder, or military member.** These youth may be worried or scared that their loved one is in danger. They also may be separated from the parent when a disaster or other large-scale event happens.

When should I seek professional help for youth?

Consider seeking professional help if youth fit one or more of the “at risk” descriptions above **and are experiencing a lot of stress that does not seem to be getting better.** It also is a good idea to seek help if youth are so bothered by the disaster or stressful event that they **have a very hard time in school, at home, or interacting with family members and friends.**

In general, the same advice applies to adults! If you are distressed and your stress reactions do not improve or they interfere with your everyday life, consider seeking professional help.

Where to seek help?

You can seek help from a mental health professional (e.g., psychologists, social workers, school counselors, etc.). For non-emergencies, you can find a psychologist via the American Psychological Association's website at <http://locator.apa.org>. You also can **call 2-1-1** or ask the youth's **doctor for a referral**. If you are in a rural area or having trouble getting a timely appointment, consider utilizing the services of a telecounselor.

We especially recommend seeking help from psychologists who are trained in evidence-based strategies for youth mental health, such as those affiliated with the American Psychological Association. See the link below.

**You can find information about how and where to seek help –
and directories for local providers – by going to the website for Effective Child Therapy:**
<https://effectivechildtherapy.org/tips-tools/advice-for-selecting-a-psychologist/>

Where can I get emergency professional help for my child or another family member?

If an adult or youth needs emergency help, **call 9-1-1.**

Also, you can call the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): (800) 662-4357. SAMHSA runs a 24-hour mental health hotline that provides education, support, and connections to treatment.

If you are concerned about a potential suicide attempt, contact one of the Lifeline numbers below.

**National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline**

1-800-273-TALK
(1-800-273-8255)

**Suicide and
Crisis Lifeline**

988



Reliable Resources

It can be challenging to locate reliable information during times of disaster or when a large-scale stressful event happens. One reason for this is that many people rely on social media outlets for information. Many social media outlets do not fact-check the information being shared. This has resulted in a huge amount of misinformation being spread across the globe, including rumors, lies, hoaxes, and even conspiracy theories. Misinformation can result in increased stress. On a more serious level, misinformation can put people and their families at risk of serious harm, and may even result in what could have been an avoidable loss of life.

To make informed decisions, you need as much accurate information as possible. But it can be difficult to sort through the mountain of information and know what is true and what is not. One recommended strategy is to identify and keep a list of a few trusted resources that you can rely on for accurate information. It may be a good idea to choose one local, one national and one international news source for updates. Keep in mind that social media may NOT be a reliable source for news.

When looking for trusted news sources, choose ones that highlight facts and not opinions, feature credible experts and witnesses (who can be verified), and have a longstanding reputation for accuracy and fairness.

The resources below provide some excellent information on how to gauge whether or not a resource is trustworthy. They can help you determine whether a website or information coming across your social media feed is to be trusted...or not.

For more information on reliable resources, check out the following:

Vermont State Colleges System

Misinformation and Fact Checking – How To Do Research

This excellent guide provides detailed information on spotting misinformation and fake news and provides some fact-checking tools and resources.

<https://libraries.vsc.edu/research/evaluating/misinformation>

Rutgers University Library

Evaluating News Resources

This guide provides information, tools and tips on identifying and avoiding misinformation, disinformation, and propaganda.

https://libguides.rutgers.edu/fake_news



References

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Additional Helpful Websites

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: *Tips For Talking to Children and Youth After Traumatic Events*

Guide for parents, caregivers and educators with advice for discussing traumatic events with youth.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/tips-talking-to-children-after-traumatic-event.pdf>

National Association of School Psychologists: *Relocating To A New School: Tips For Families:*

Provides families with information on helping students relocate to a new school.

<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/school-safety-and-crisis/natural-disaster-resources/relocating-to-a-new-school-tips-for-families>

American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry: *Suicide Resource Center*

Important information and resources regarding youth suicide.

https://www.aacap.org/aacap/Families_and_Youth/Resource_Centers/Suicide_Resource_Center/Home.aspx

Child Mind Institute: *Mental Health Disorders and Teen Substance Use*

Article highlighting why many teenagers turn to alcohol or drug use to help them manage feelings and how the substances affect them.

<https://childmind.org/article/mental-health-disorders-and-substance-use/>

Stopbullying.gov

Website with detailed information for adults and youth about bullying and prevention resources.

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/>

Go Noodle

Excellent website with videos that provide guided activities to support youth physical and mental health.

<https://www.gonoodle.com/>





This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Disaster Kit Word Search

Can you find the following family disaster supply kit items in the word search below? Good Luck!

Flashlight
Water
Batteries

Radio
Cellphone
Food

Toys
Cash
Medicine

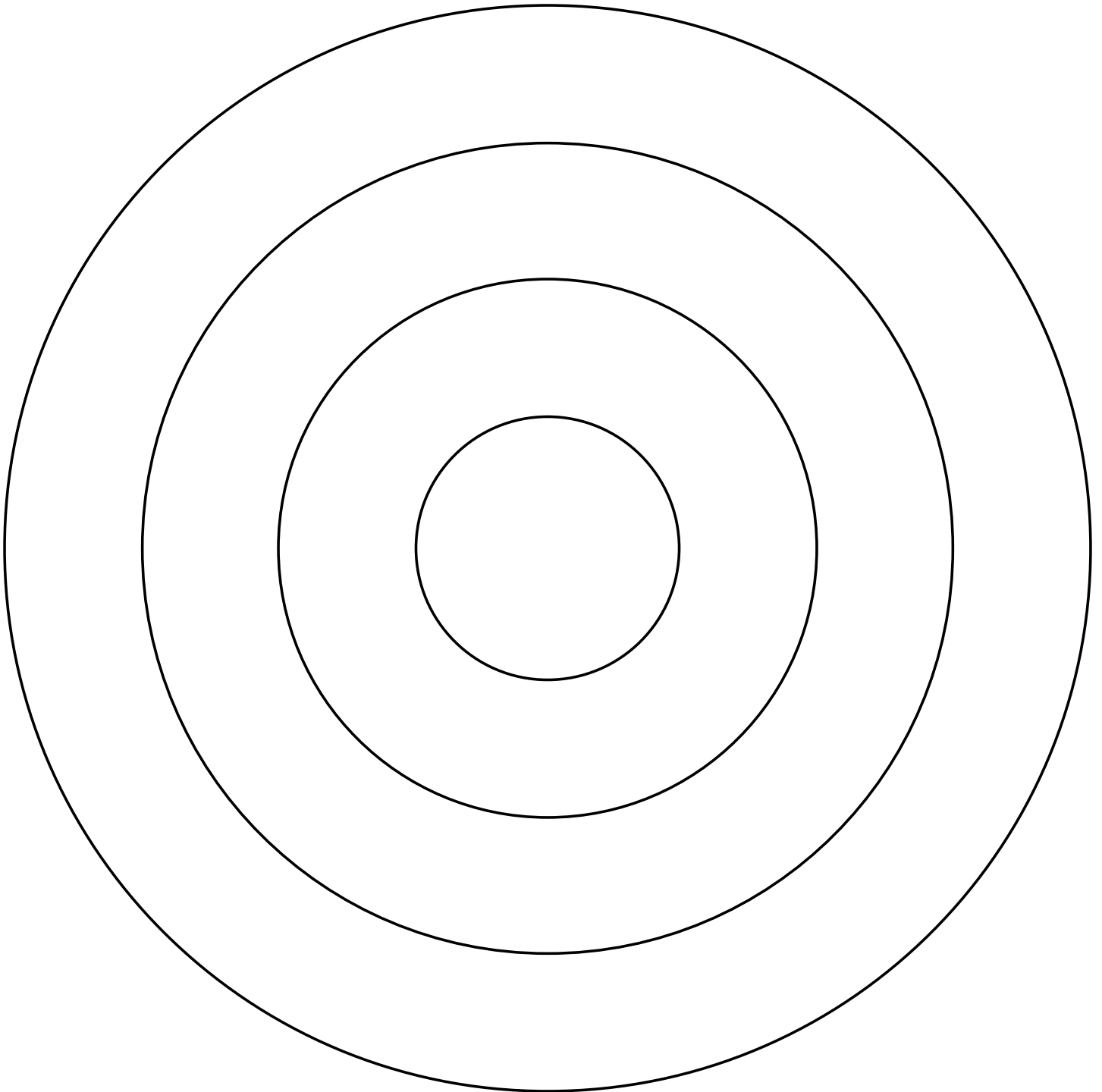
Blanket
Keys
First Aid Kit

F	Z	Y	O	R	M	E	A	W	B	I	T	P	W	U
S	I	V	G	B	E	Q	E	C	A	D	R	E	I	H
Y	E	R	H	B	L	A	N	K	E	T	F	J	E	F
G	R	U	S	A	I	H	G	S	Z	R	E	W	I	L
A	S	A	G	T	U	F	W	A	L	A	M	R	B	A
T	C	Y	M	T	A	O	Y	B	O	O	K	E	Y	S
Y	G	R	T	E	P	I	T	G	E	C	P	L	E	H
M	O	I	S	R	A	F	D	V	R	D	A	J	A	L
E	A	W	I	I	U	Q	U	K	E	Z	L	S	B	I
D	H	T	B	E	L	I	R	R	I	C	R	U	H	G
I	T	O	Y	S	A	M	Z	H	E	T	I	L	Y	H
C	Z	P	A	T	O	I	P	X	D	A	V	W	Y	T
I	G	C	E	L	L	P	H	O	N	E	S	R	L	X
N	S	I	Q	U	D	Y	Q	E	N	R	A	D	I	O
E	H	S	O	A	Y	F	G	A	O	W	Y	E	N	O



People In My Life Circle

Use this circle to complete the People In My Life Activity from Page 13. Write your name in the middle. Then, add the names of family, friends, pets, teachers, or others who are important to you in the surrounding circles.



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