

Introducing the Community Trauma Toolkit

The Community Trauma Toolkit is a suite of resources to help support adults and children before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event. The toolkit is grouped by these key audiences:

- Parents and caregivers
- General practitioners (GPs)
- Educators
- First responders
- Health and social service practitioners (HSSPs)
- Community leaders

The resources and training materials have been developed by the following timeframes:

- Preparedness
- Immediate
- Short-term recovery
- Long-term recovery
- Ongoing

The toolkit will equip you to:

- prepare children and their families both practically and psychologically for a disaster
- interact and support children and their families as they re-establish a sense of safety immediately after an event
- interact with children during the event in a way that may enhance their resilience and recovery
- support children and their families in the ongoing recovery process
- understand the importance of self-care during and after a traumatic event; and
- identify emotional and behavioural difficulties in children that may indicate more ongoing, specialised support is required.

“175 million children per year will be affected by disasters”¹

What is the toolkit about?

The toolkit is based on the understanding that natural disasters and other traumatic events can significantly impact infants and children. It will help you to understand some of the impacts of disasters and how to help reduce them. It also recognises the central role children can play in preparedness and recovery.

Children and infants depend on the adults around them for safety and security. During a disaster they will need reassurance, care, and opportunities to share their feelings. These resources provide a starting point for adults to help children and families navigate the different stages of a disaster.

Why was this toolkit developed?

Children tend to be among the worst affected in disasters for a number of reasons: they are dependent on adults for safety and protection, are in formative periods of physical and psychological development, and may be unable to recognise hazards on their own.^{2 3}

Feedback from workers and families indicates they feel they are missing the knowledge and skills required to adequately identify, assess and support children following a disaster or traumatic event. Whilst they are keenly aware of the needs of children in community trauma events, they want guidance on ways to interact with children and families that promote resilience and coping and decrease negative long-term impacts.

Research indicates that experiences of, and responses to, potentially traumatic events will vary depending on a child’s developmental stage, age, personality, pre-event functioning and previous life experiences. A child’s reactions will also depend on how the adults around them react during and after the disaster.

How was this toolkit developed?

This toolkit was developed via extensive consultation with the audiences, disaster recovery and resilience organisations and experts, and children and families with a lived experience of community trauma events.






**To access the toolkit visit:
emergingminds.com.au/resources**

¹ Dyregrov, A., Yule, W. and Olf, M. (2018) Children and natural disasters. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 9, 2.

² Grindlay, J. and Breeze, K. (2016) Planning for disasters involving children in Australia: A practical guide. *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*, 52(2), 204-212.

³ Pechtel, P., Lyons-Ruth, K., Anderson, C. and Teicher, M. (2014). Sensitive periods of amygdala development: The role of maltreatment in preadolescence. *NeuroImage*, 97, 236-244.

The toolkit's six key audiences are uniquely placed to support children and families at various stages before, during and after such events.

<p>Educators</p> 	<p>Educators have expertise and extended contact with children and often are a key support in preparing them for natural disasters. They may act as first responders during a disaster and also play a key role in identifying those children who may require additional assistance in their recovery. Educators often play a role in reestablishing routines post-event and supporting post-disaster recovery.</p>
<p>GPs and HSSPs</p> 	<p>General practitioners (GPs) and health and social service practitioners (HSSPs) interact with children and families as part of their everyday working lives. Their training and skills may be called upon to assist in a voluntary or professional capacity before, during and after an event. GPs and HSSPs' pre-existing and ongoing relationships with children and families are especially valuable in aiding post-disaster recovery.</p>
<p>First responders</p> 	<p>First responders' presence during the immediate response stage of an incident can contribute to a child's recovery and play an invaluable role in supporting resilience and enhancing outcomes for children. They are often required to support others whilst being personally affected by the disaster.</p>
<p>Community leaders</p> 	<p>Research has found that a community's capacity to 'bounce back' from disaster depends on strong social networks and the ability to return to normal life.⁴ Community leaders are in the position to bring the community together and provide information and support following a traumatic event.</p>
<p>Parents and carers</p> 	<p>Parents and carers know their children better than anyone and are in a position to provide support before, during and after a disaster. However, parents may need help identifying trauma reactions in themselves and their children and finding a balance between supporting children and caring for themselves.</p>


⁴ Ronan, K.R. & Johnston, D.M. (2005). *Promoting community resilience in disasters: The role for schools, youth and families*. New York: Springer.

Toolkit content

The toolkit includes a diverse range of quick, easy to access resources including:

- Podcasts** 

Podcasts featuring Michelle Roberts, Briony Towers and Kate Brady.
- Videos** 

A range of videos showcasing expert interviews and case studies from communities impacted by disaster.
- Written resources** 

A range of downloadable/printable articles, fact sheets, tip cards and infographics for different audiences relaying key concepts.
- Workshops** 

A suite of training materials aimed at four key audiences: educators, first responders, community leaders (for families and carers) and health and social service practitioners. The materials include slide presentations with speaker notes and accompanying handbooks, fact sheets and handouts.

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emergingminds.com.au/resources

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