

Helping Children After a Natural Disaster



Information & Lessons for Teachers of Young Children

After individuals experience a natural disaster, it is common to feel fearful and anxious. Living through a dangerous situation such as a storm, flood, hurricane, earthquake and tornado, may require extended time for children, adults, and communities to heal and recover. Damage to familiar environments such as homes and schools can also lead to a sense of detachment and insecurity. However, schools and teachers will serve an important role by providing support and most importantly, continuing routines that reinforce a sense of normalcy. Together as a community, we recover.

In an effort to provide resources for educators to use with children in the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, a collection of lesson plans was developed by instructional experts and child psychologists at the Children's Learning Institute (CLI) at the McGovern Medical School, a part of UTHealth. These lessons are designed for use by classroom teachers, education specialists, social workers, administrators, and other trusted adults who work with children. Teachers and other trusted adults are paramount in creating a safe and welcoming space for students at the beginning of any school year, but are particularly important this year as students may be experiencing and processing many different emotions related to the hurricane. These lessons are linked to popular children's books that many teachers may already possess, or they can readily purchase commercially. These lessons are designed for use with children from early childhood through the primary grades (pre-kindergarten to grade 2).

The goal of these lessons is to reinforce important social, emotional, and self-concept skills that are particularly relevant for young students returning to school after the

storm rather than addressing specific personal experiences related to Hurricane Harvey. These lessons were crafted to provide students with an opportunity to learn about and discuss topics that may be particularly pertinent right now – such as caring and consideration of others, recognizing our feelings, what to do when you feel scared, and sharing. Here are a few tips for teachers:

- For most children, a return to a typical daily school routine will be the most beneficial way to cope with the effects of a natural disaster.
- Some children may want to talk about their experiences with Hurricane Harvey and others may not, and that is appropriate. No student should be forced to participate or share if they do not want to discuss their experiences.
- If a student does not want to discuss their experiences, it may be helpful to monitor his/her behavior over the next few weeks to observe if there are any significant changes (i.e., aggression, withdrawal, isolation). This will be especially important if the teacher is aware that the family has been significantly impacted by Hurricane Harvey.
- All children will process their experiences differently. The teacher's role is to listen attentively and respond to each student's individual needs, emotions and experiences.

We hope these lessons will serve as a useful resource that leads to discussions between educators and students in ways that allow educators to provide a sense of security, support, and hope in our resilient communities.

Please see next page for lessons and book information.

LESSONS AND BOOKS

Grade Levels	Lesson Title	Title, Author	ISBN Number	Estimated Cost
Pre-K to K	Feeling Safe	Owen, Kevin Henkes	978.0688114497 Scholastic item#: NTS968618	Paperback: \$9.02 Scholastic paperback: \$4.88
Pre-K to K	Sharing Space	<i>Napping House</i> , Don and Audrey Wood	978.0152026325	Hardcover: \$13.95 Board book: \$6.08
Pre-K to 1	Caring for Others	<i>Caring</i> , Isabel Thomas	978.1432971137	Paperback: \$3.91
Pre-K to 1	Learning to Donate & Share	<i>The Rainbow Fish</i> , Marcus Pfister	978.1558580091	Hardcover: \$12.69 Barnes & Noble
Pre-K to 1	What Makes You Feel Safe?	<i>Kissing Hand</i> , Audrey Penn	978.1933718101	Paperback: \$9.95
Pre-K to 1	Little Quack	<i>Little Quack</i> , Lauren Thompson	978.0689847233	Hardcover: \$6.11
Pre-K to 2	Having a Terrible Day	<i>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</i> , Judith Viorst	978.0689711732	Paperback: \$5.99
Prek-K to 1	Wemberly Worried	<i>Wemberly Worried</i> , Kevin Henkes	978.0061857768	Paperback: \$6.07
Grades 1-2	A Chair for My Mother	<i>A Chair for My Mother</i> , Vera B. Williams	978.0688040741	Paperback: \$6.59