



♥ East Baton Rouge Parish School Board

♥ 4070 Tunica Street ♥ Baton Rouge, LA 70805

♥ Phone: (225) 226-2273 ♥ FAX: (225) 226-4610

♥ <http://icare.ebrschools.org>

Parent Tips Following a Hurricane

I CARE is providing the following recommendations for parents as you assist your child in coping with the aftermath of our recent hurricane. Children's reactions (like adults) vary greatly; they have suffered losses too and it is natural for them to express disbelief, anger, sadness, anxiety and depression. Some may exhibit emotional and behavioral issues that may influence their ability to cope with their disaster experience and could also impact school performance.

Child/teen reactions may include:

- A wide array of fears
- Regressive behavior
- Behavior difficulties, including disruptive or overly active behavior
- Depressive symptoms
- School difficulties
- Nightmares and other sleep disturbances
- Decline in ability to focus resulting in diminished academic success
- Separation anxiety for young students
- Increased risky behaviors (drug use, sexual acting out, dropping out of school, and antisocial and/or suicidal behavior) for adolescents

Parents can help by:

- Modeling healthy reactions. Children's functioning will be influenced by how their parents and other caregivers cope. They often turn to adults for information, comfort and help. Be a healthy role model and remain calm in interactions with your children.
- Calm their worries about their friends' safety; even though phones may not be working, reassure your children that their friends' parents are taking care of them, just the way they are being taken care of by you.
- Tell your children about community recovery efforts. Reassure children that things are being done to restore electricity, phones, water and gas. Tell them that the city-parish will be removing debris and helping families.
- Answer questions briefly and honestly.
- Take care of your children's health. Help them get enough rest, exercise, and healthy food. Be sure they have a balance of quiet and physical activities.

- Maintain regular daily life, (mealtimes, bedtimes, homework schedules, worship activities, etc.) even in the midst of disruption and change, as much as possible; children feel more secure with structure and routines.
- Maintain expectations. Stick to family rules about behavior and respect for others; continue family chores, but keep in mind that children may need more reminding than usual.
- Encourage children to help; they cope better and recover sooner if they feel they are helping out. Give them small clean-up tasks or other ways to contribute. Afterward, provide activities that are not related to the hurricane, such as playing cards or reading.
- Be extra patient; they may be more distracted and need extra assistance and reminder of homework for a while.
- Remain calm and reassuring; repeatedly assure them they are safe.
- Remind them often that you love them and that they are more important than any material possessions.
- Acknowledge their feelings/reactions. Tell them of current safety procedures and helpful plans for coping.
- Provide opportunities for children to share their concerns; inform your child's school when experiencing a change in your personal life.
- Promote and praise positive coping and problem solving skills
- Set limits on anger; be clear about expected behavior and reinforce age-appropriate anger-management and conflict-resolution concepts to ensure a climate of non-violence.
- Reduce reminders of the hurricane, including child's exposure to adult-to-adult conversations, television stories and images of the hurricane or damage.
- Be patient; some children will take more time than others to recover and may have temporary setbacks.
- Promote pro-social activities to help rebuild their neighborhood, faith and school communities.
- Seek additional help from your school counselor, *I CARE* Specialist, Safe Schools/ Healthy Students Mental Health Professional, social worker or nurse, as appropriate.

For more information:

I CARE web site: <http://icare.ebrschools.org>

School Mental Health Project, UCLA Dept. of Psychology, 866-846-4843; smhp@ucla.edu or <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/hurricane.htm>

National Child Traumatic Stress network; <http://www.NCTSNet.org>