

Helping Youth Cope with Stress

Tips for Educators

Because of their level of development, children and adolescents often struggle with how to cope well with stress. Youth can be particularly overwhelmed when their stress is connected to a traumatic event—like a natural disaster (earthquakes, tornados, and wildfires), family loss, school shootings, or community violence.

Kids and teens that experience a stressful event, or see it on television, may react with shock, sadness, anger, fear, and confusion. They may be reluctant to be alone or fearful of leaving secure areas such as the house or classroom. School personnel can help their students restore their sense of safety by talking with the children about their fears. Other tips for school personnel include:

- **Reach out and talk.** Create opportunities to have students talk, but do not force them. Try asking questions like, what do you think about these events, or how do you think these things happen? You can be a model by sharing some of your own thoughts as well as correct misinformation. Children talking about their feelings can help them cope and to know that different feelings are normal.
- **Watch and listen.** Be alert for any change in behavior. Are students talking more or less? Withdrawing from friends? Acting out? Are they behaving in any way out of the ordinary? These changes may be early warning signs that a student is struggling and needs extra support from the school and family.
- **Maintain normal routines.** A regular classroom and school schedule can provide reassurance and promote a sense of stability and safety. Encourage students to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities but do not push them if they seem overwhelmed.
- **Take care of yourself.** You are better able to support your students if you are healthy, coping well, and taking care of yourself first.
 - Eat healthy, well-balanced meals
 - Exercise on a regular basis
 - Get plenty of sleep
 - Give yourself a break if you feel stressed out

