Here for Each Other

HELPING FAMILIES AFTER A HURRICANE

Here for Families and Communities

SESAME STREET PSEG

Family Guide: Hurricanes

ADVISORS

» American Red Cross Scientific Advisory Council

» Angela D. Mickalide, PhD, MCHES, Emergency Medical Services for Children National Resource Center, Children's National Health System

» Child Mind Institute's Stress and Resilience Program

» Myla Harrison, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Bureau of Children, Youth and Families, NYC Department of Mental Health & Hygiene

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Here for Each Other

HELPING FAMILIES AFTER A HURRICANE

FAMILY GUIDE

You have each other. You bring your child comfort and make him feel safe. Your love helps him overcome obstacles. After a hurricane, it is your support that soothes your child and allows him to see that everything is going to be okay.

To help you as you begin your recovery, we've developed **"Here for Each Other."** This family guide offers tips and activities to do with your child that offer comfort and assurance.

We hope some of these ideas can help you create a warm and soothing environment that will allow both you and your child to look toward sunnier days to come. And remember, you are not alone. **We are here for each other!**

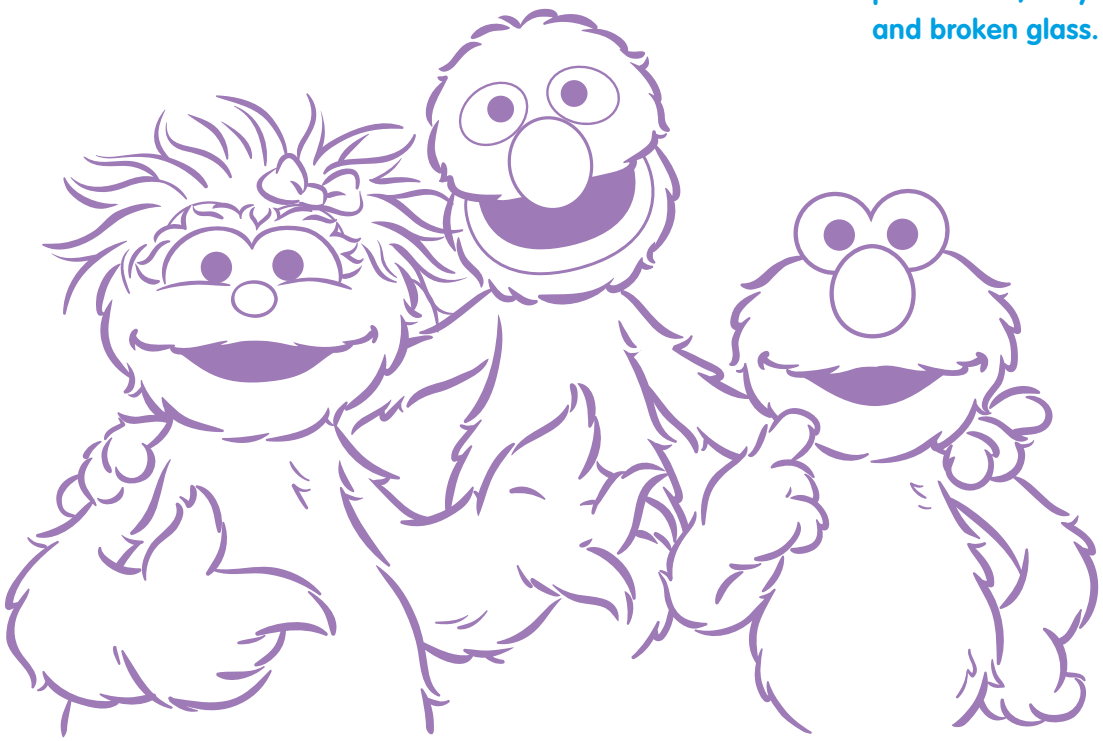
WHAT HAPPENED?

There was a hurricane. A hurricane is a very strong storm with a lot of wind and rain.

SAFETY FIRST

Make sure you remember to:

- **Let your family know that you are safe.**
- **Stay informed about what is happening. Follow officials' recommendations.**
- **Keep away from things like fallen power lines, dirty or contaminated water, and broken glass.**



Here for Families and Communities

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Comfort and Reassurance

Right after a hurricane, children need to feel secure. While it may be challenging, here are some simple ways to create a calm environment for your child:

Provide Comfort

Assure your child that she is safe and loved. Let her know that you will take care of her. Young children need physical comfort, so hold hands and snuggle often. Holding a comfort item, like a blanket or toy, may also help.

Model Healthy Ways of Coping

After a disaster, children look to the adults around them to see how they should feel and react. As much as possible, try to stay calm. Encouraging your child to talk about her feelings is also very important.

Try to Keep One Routine

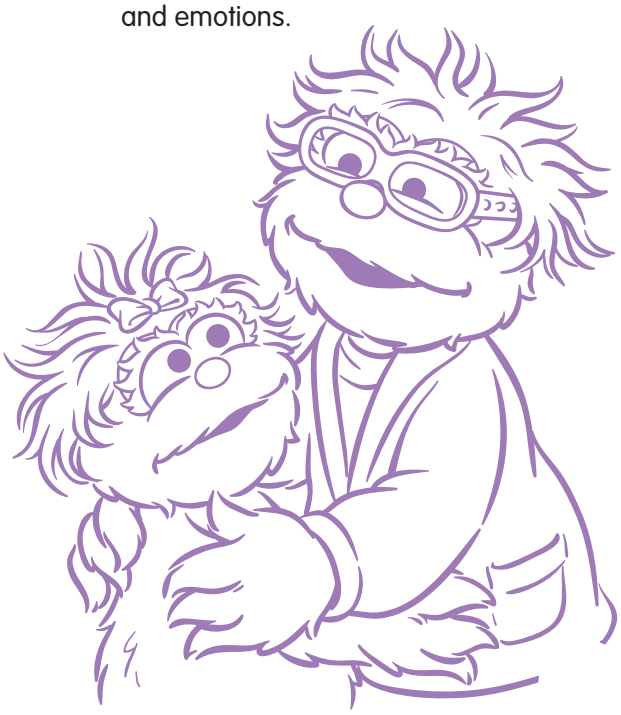
There is comfort in the familiar, especially after a disaster. Choose at least one routine that you can keep even if your situation or location changed. Simple activities that your child can look forward to each day can give him a sense of control, such as extra cuddles every morning or the same lullaby every night.

Create a Safety Net

Simply seeing or overhearing something that reminds your child of the disaster can trigger feelings of fear or sadness. Try to surround him with positive conversations and activities. Remind him that the disaster is over and that he is safe now.

Monitor the Media

Avoid your child seeing repeated images of the disaster and its damage as young children may think the event is happening over and over, in real time. If you think your child might have seen or heard something, ask him about it. Correct inaccurate information and let him express his thoughts and emotions.



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Watch and Listen

It is common for children to show signs of stress immediately after a disaster. If changes in behavior persist or appear much later or affect your child's everyday life, it might be time to seek professional help. Below are some common reactions and helpful ways to respond.

Looking for Signs of Stress

- **If you observe** unusual clinging or fear of being alone...
- **try to** use gentle words and reassure him that you will keep him safe. Offer a comfort item like a toy or blanket. If he is fearful of separating, remind him that you always come back and let him know when you will return.

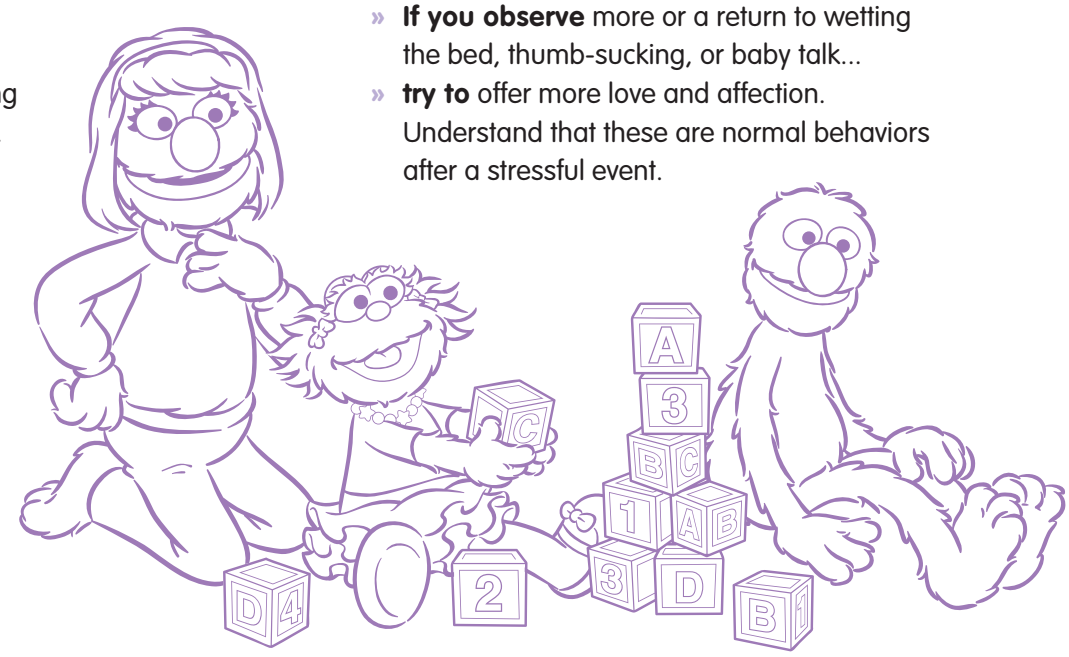
- **If you observe** fear that the disaster will happen again...
- **try to** keep your child away from the news or other reminders of the disaster. Remind her that the disaster is over and that she is safe with you.

- **If you observe** trouble sleeping...
- **try to** keep a consistent routine to provide comfort. Read a favorite story or sing a favorite song each night. Simple breathing or a massage may also help.

- **If you observe** your child is less open, verbal, or exhibiting unusually introverted behavior...
- **try to** ask how he is feeling and provide an opportunity for discussion or for him to ask questions. Also, offer other ways for him to express himself, such as drawing.

- **If you observe** more frequent outbursts and tantrums...
- **try to** describe her feelings with words, such as angry, sad, scared, or worried. Provide an outlet by allowing her to play or by going for a walk together. Keeping routines can also help prevent tantrums.

- **If you observe** more or a return to wetting the bed, thumb-sucking, or baby talk...
- **try to** offer more love and affection. Understand that these are normal behaviors after a stressful event.



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Questions and Answers

Your child needs to know it's okay to ask questions at his own pace. The following are some common questions after any disaster and comforting ways to respond:

What Happened?

There was an emergency—something we didn't expect would happen. I know it was scary, but I'm here to take care of you and keep you safe.

Will We Be Okay?

Yes, we will be okay. I'm doing things to make sure we are safe and make things better for our family. Look around: there are many helpers working hard to make sure we will be okay.

Why Did This Happen? Did We Do Something Bad?

We didn't do anything bad to make this happen. Sometimes things happen and there is no reason and it's no one's fault. The good thing is that these things don't happen often and we are safe now.

Who Will Take Care of Me?

I will take care of you. I'm going to do everything I can to make sure you have what you need. There are also other people who can help like...

When Can We Go Home?

I don't know when we can go home. I wish we could go home, too. But what I do know is that we are still a family and that home is wherever we are together.

There are questions you may not have an answer to. It's okay to be honest and say, "I don't know." You can follow up by saying, "But what I do know is that I love you and I'm going to keep you safe."

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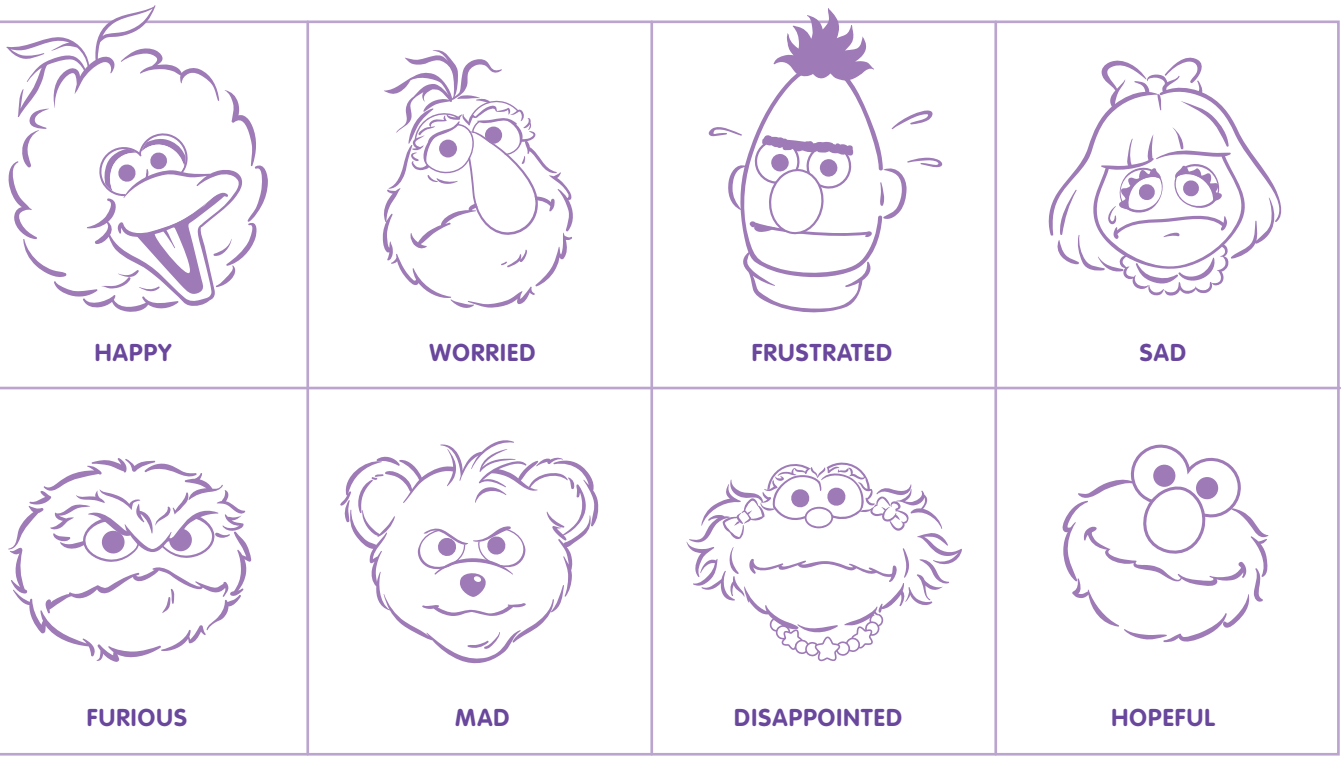
Big Feelings

After an emergency, your child may have some big feelings that come and go in waves. You can help by giving your child words to name her emotions and by asking questions that encourage her to open up. Let her know that these feelings are normal and that it's okay to talk about her feelings. Help her think about what could make her feel better.

How Do You Feel?

Show your child these feelings faces, and ask him to point to one that matches how he's feeling. You might say, "I see you're pointing to the frustrated face. Why do you feel frustrated?"



Some children may talk about their feelings; others may express themselves through art or play. Try to offer materials like paper, crayons, play dough, toys, dolls, blocks, fabric, or cardboard boxes. This gives your child a variety of ways to share his thoughts and feelings with you.

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We Have Each Other

Here are some ways to support one another and move forward together after an emergency:

Spend Time Together

Simply laughing, moving, and playing together can help children feel safe. Try drawing a picture or singing a song.

Look for the Helpers

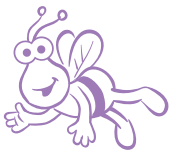
Help your child focus on all the helpers around him. Does he notice the police officers, firefighters, utility workers, doctors, nurses, or volunteers? It can be reassuring to know that there are many people working to make things better.

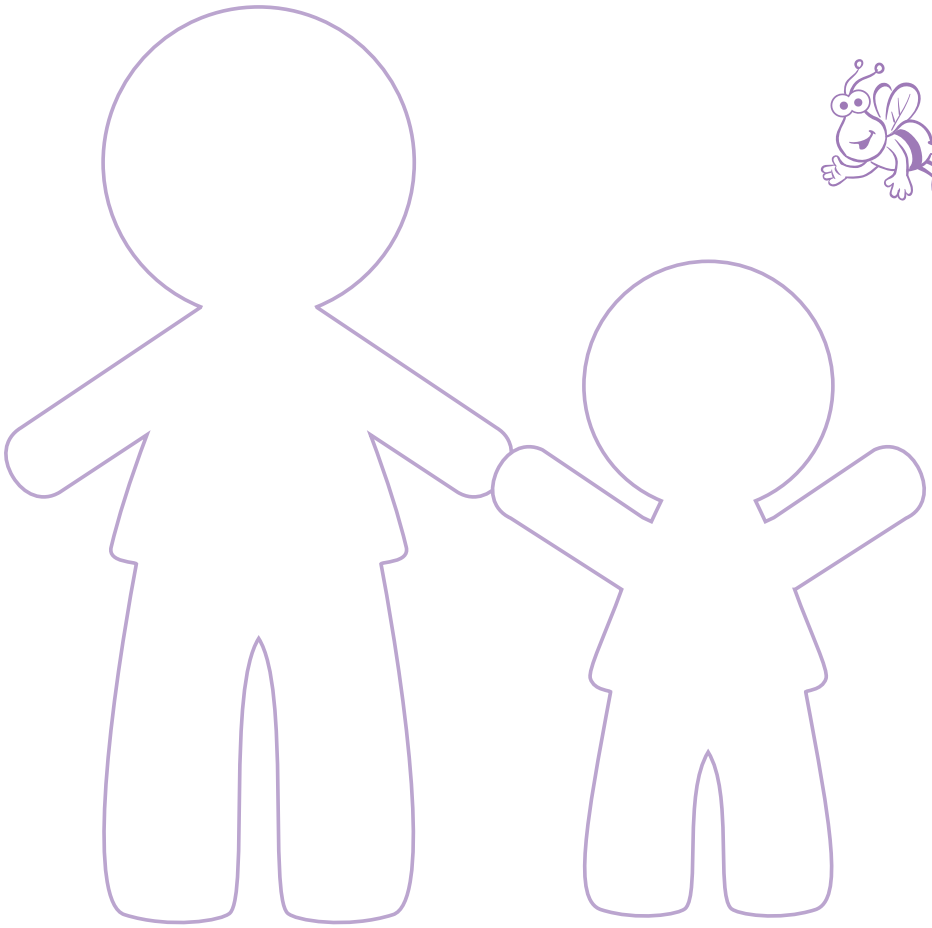
Empower Your Child

Give him simple responsibilities or choices to help him maintain a sense of control. If your child has been affected indirectly, encourage him to help others. Perhaps he can save coins or write cards to those in need.

After an emergency, remember, you are not alone. Look for the helpers all around you. They are there to keep you safe and sound. Think of someone who has helped you—a friend, neighbor, firefighter, police officer, nurse, emergency responder, or teacher.

DRAW A PICTURE of this person and yourself in the space to the right.





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Take Care of Yourself

During times of stress, it can be easy to forget about your own physical and emotional needs. Remember: you are more helpful to your child when you take care of yourself. Try to do something that helps you feel a little better each day. Here are some ideas:

Breathe

Close your eyes and take a deep breath through your nose. Pretend you are filling up a balloon in your belly. Exhale slowly and repeat.

Relax

To relieve muscle tension, roll your neck and shoulders or make big arm circles.

Stay Active

Go for a walk or turn on some music and dance. Even five minutes of stretching can help your body feel more relaxed and cared for.

Connect

Reach out to someone you trust and can talk to—a relative, friend, faith leader, or counselor. You are not alone.

Imagine

Close your eyes, take deep breaths, and picture a situation or place that feels peaceful.

Sing or Listen

Sing a favorite tune or listen to a song that lifts your mood.

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Story: Hugs All Around

Elmo's day started with the sun shining through his window and a warm **good-morning hug** from Mommy. Getting hugged by his family and friends is Elmo's favorite way to begin the day, but he loves giving hugs, too! So Elmo went all around Sesame Street to share some fuzzy hugs with his favorite friends and neighbors.

First, he spotted his friend Alan working at Hooper's Store. Elmo spread his arms wide open and said, "Here's a big **thank-you hug** for always being there to listen to Elmo when he needs a friend!"

Then, Elmo saw Zoe, who was feeling a little scared because a very loud fire truck had just passed by. "That's too loud!" she said. Elmo reassured her that the loud siren means that firefighters are going to help somebody. Elmo then gave her a tight **we-are-safe hug** and she didn't feel so frightened anymore.

Finally, when Elmo got back home, it was time for bed. Elmo and Daddy snuggled under the blanket and read their favorite book together. They gave each other a very long **I-love-you hug**. Elmo couldn't think of a more perfect way to end his hug-filled day!

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Our Favorite Things

All the Sesame Street friends have a favorite toy or animal friend that helps them feel better when they are scared or sad. Have your child choose one of these cards to hold when she needs a Sesame Street friend to help her feel better.

Memory Game Instructions

1. Play with a friend. Cut apart these cards and lay them facedown in a big square shape.
2. Take turns flipping over cards, two at a time. If the cards match, keep them and take another turn. If the cards do not match, turn them back over in their places and try to remember the cards you've seen so you can find matches in the next turn. Let your friend take a turn.
3. The person who has the most cards at the end gets a special hug.

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