



Australian Red Cross
THE POWER OF HUMANITY



Helping children and young people cope with crisis

Information for parents and caregivers



CRISIS CARE COMMITMENT

This booklet is designed to:

- help parents understand why and how children might react to challenging or overwhelming experiences
- help parents respond to the needs of their children.

Some words of encouragement:

- no-one knows your child as well as you do
- family is the most important support network for young children
- getting help can be a good idea.

A little early help can save a lot of heartache.

See the suggestions at the back of this booklet. ►

Original content compiled by Ruth Wraith and Australian Red Cross (2010). Australian Red Cross acknowledges the use of material from 'What Parents Can Do: Helping Children and Adolescents Cope With Violence and Disasters' published by the National Institute of Mental Health, USA (2006). This resource was originally developed with the generous support of the Alfred Felton Bequest and ANZ Trustees Program, Charitable Purposes in Victoria - Ruth Watchorn Estate, Bendigo and Adelaide Bank Community Enterprise Foundation and Eldon & Anne Foote Trust of the Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation. Red Cross thanks the parents and young people affected by emergencies who shared their stories in the development of this booklet. Thank you also to the agencies and mental health professionals who assisted in the consultation and drafting stages of the project. All people featured in photographs have consented to the use of their image in Red Cross resources.

Cover photo credit: Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker & Australian Red Cross / Tim Lofthouse


This booklet uses the term 'parent' when referring to the primary caregiver/s.

This may also include family members or other close or trusted adults.

The words 'child' and 'children' are used when referring to all young people aged 0-25 years.

Contents

| | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 1. Stress and trauma | 5 |
| 2. Loss and grief | 6 |
| 3. Reactions: 5 years and under | 8 |
| 4. Reactions: 6 to 11 years | 10 |
| 5. Reactions: 12 to 18 years | 12 |
| 6. Reactions: 18 to 25 years | 14 |
| 7. Sleep | 16 |
| 8. Looking after yourself | 18 |
| 9. Helping children cope | 20 |
| 10. The media | 22 |
| 11. Suggested activities | 24 |
| 12. When and where to get help | 28 |



Trauma can happen after a single event or experience.

Trauma can also occur if stress builds up over time.

But remember not all stressful situations cause trauma.

1. Stress and trauma

Sometimes children have experiences which are very demanding, challenging or overwhelming.

They include:

- natural disasters – floods, fires or storms
- incidents – vehicle or other accidents, deaths, relationship breakdowns
- violence – fights, war, domestic violence, abuse
- serious illness or other medical conditions.

The impact may be mild or severe and may damage the child's psychological health and emotional wellbeing, causing stress or trauma.

Trauma can happen when someone:

- thinks they could have died
- witnesses or experiences a tragic, terrifying, or overwhelming event
- experiences a big shock or is very scared
- is overwhelmed or feels like they have no control.

Trauma:

- arises from emotional and psychological injury
- can prompt concerning behaviours
- can produce strong feelings (extreme ups and downs)
- can include frightening thoughts, sensations and painful feelings.

Some things to consider:

- Some children will be fine – they won't have any concerning reactions at all;
- Most children recover with time and the appropriate understanding and support;
- Reactions may occur at different times after the event;
- Some children grow from their experience and discover new strengths or skills;
- How parents recover is the strongest indicator of how a child will cope.

There are many ways to help children cope with stress and change. See the table at the back of this booklet. ►

Some children will be fine. Others may develop a new sense of resilience and strength.

Recovery can be quick and straightforward. Occasionally, it can be more complex and take longer.

Everyone reacts differently and recovers in their own way.

There is no right or wrong.

2. Loss and grief

It's normal for people to grieve when they lose someone or something important to them. Children, like adults, express grief in different ways.

This can involve intense feelings like:

- sadness, pain and hurt
- yearning
- uncertainty or confusion
- fear
- anger
- disappointment
- guilt.

Sometimes, when they are grieving, young people can become:

- lazy or apathetic
- aggressive
- withdrawn
- easily irritated.

“I thought my three year-old wouldn't understand when her grandfather died but she noticed he was missing. We explained that he had gone away and looked at photos, telling her: 'We're here with you, I'm here with you'.”

“My 19-year-old son planted a tree in memory of his mate who was killed in a car accident. My 22-year-old daughter had a BBQ with friends. They found their own way to keep his spirit alive.”

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

Grief is not an illness that needs to be cured.

It is the normal, healthy reaction to loss.



Coping with loss and grief

- Assure children it's normal to feel sad and upset. Let them know it might last for a while but they will feel better in time.
- Assure children they are not alone.
- Share positive memories and treasured mementos.
- Provide support to children when commemorating or farewelling with a ritual or action (writing a letter, visiting a special place, planting a tree, releasing a balloon).
- Where possible, allow children to make choices, rather than making decisions for them.
- Model healthy responses. If they see you 'bottling things up', they may mimic this behaviour. It's okay to cry or show emotion in front of children. This can help them release their own feelings.

According to their age and capacity to understand:

- let children know how you are feeling, without overwhelming them
- be alert to children creating false ideas about what 'might' have happened
- be honest.

You might also visit a GP or other health professional.

"I held it together for ages and when I finally cried in front of the kids, they gave me great comfort. It helped them to help me. Made them feel stronger. They needed to see that everyone feels heavy and sad sometimes."

"The loss of our horses and dogs was hard for everyone. The kids felt guilty that they couldn't save them.

We reminded them that they were wonderful carers of those animals and focused on the good memories."

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

Reassure young people that they will be looked after and that over time their pain will decrease.



3. Reactions: infants to 5 years

Some common reactions include:

- returning to early behaviours like thumb-sucking, bedwetting or being scared of the dark
- sleep difficulties including night terrors
- changes to eating patterns and dietary habits
- separation difficulties, not wanting to be alone
- being easily startled, hyperalert or hyperactive
- challenging behaviours
- clinging to familiar people or things
- feeling unsafe
- fears of a crisis event happening again
- forgetting new skills, manners or self-care behaviour
- facial expressions of fear
- crying, whimpering or screaming.


“ We had donated clothes after the fires because we lost everything. My two-year-old would undress after I dressed her in the mornings. Someone suggested I wrap the ‘new’ clothes up, like a gift. It worked. My little one needed to feel a sense of ownership over her belongings again.”

“It was hard to know if our grandson’s tantrums were normal two-year-old behaviour or trauma. We tried to be fair and consistent in our discipline and made sure he got plenty of sleep. It went away after a few months.”

“Our little son cried a lot after the cyclone. I would show him the sky, speaking calmly to let him know he was safe. Years later, he still gets upset with bad weather but it’s much less and as soon as he knows he’s safe, he’s okay again.”

“My five-year-old went back to sucking her thumb after a car accident. We tried to make her stop, which only made her feel worse. The main thing is to not get angry or upset about it - she stopped after a couple of months when she felt ready.”

Australian Red Cross / Stephen McIlvenna



Parents’ recovery has a big influence on how young people recover.

Give plenty of hugs and affection to little children. Let them be near you.

4. Reactions: 6 to 11 years

Children between six and 11 years-of-age may experience any of the previous reactions. They may also:

- become depressed, anxious, naughty, aggressive
- be easily annoyed or irritable
- start fights
- have angry outbursts
- become quiet, and perhaps withdrawn and isolated around friends and family
- feel guilty
- feel numb emotionally
- complain of unfounded physical problems
- behave like a younger child
- be overactive or hyperactive
- struggle to pay attention, listen and remember
- not do well with school work.

“Dad gave me the job of cleaning the shed. I was 11 then. He had heaps of other stuff to do. I liked helping and building something new.”

“Our 11-year-old got anorexia in the year after the disaster but this was because of other issues, not just the fires. Through our GP, we found a psychologist and later linked up to a clinic to support her and get her healthy again. I guess an event like that can be a catalyst for other issues.”

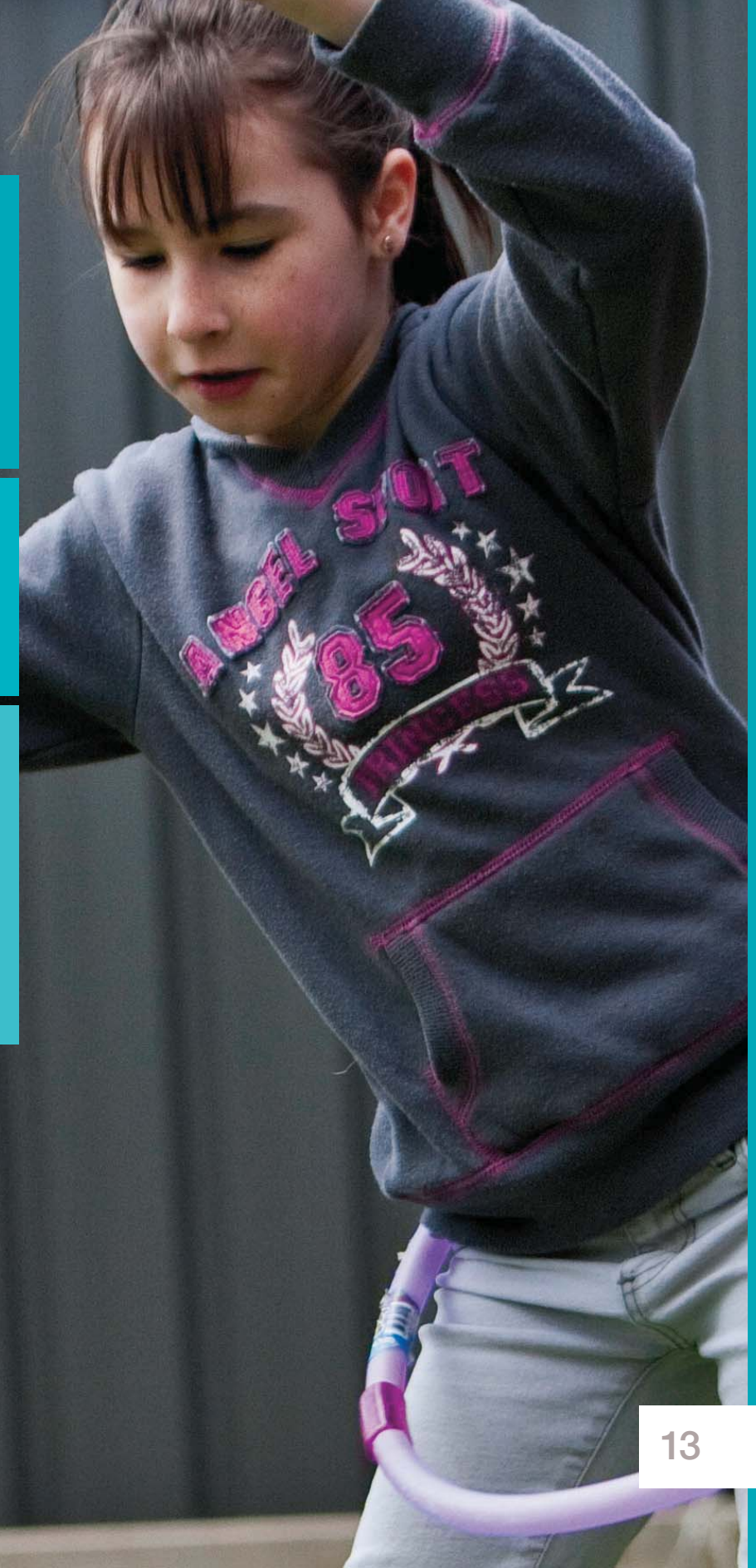
“My seven-year-old was distressed about things he’d lost, so replacing them helped. Some things were exactly the same, some were different.”

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

Family is the most important part of a child’s life. Adults give them security and confidence.

Allow time for kids to play with friends and adults.

Include children in practising plans for future disasters. This will help them feel ready and in control.



5. Reactions: 12 to 18 years

Young people between 12 and 18 years-of-age may experience the previous reactions (0-11 years).

They may also:

- feel guilty about the event or being unable to do more during the event
- become depressed
- become overactive or overinvolved
- isolate themselves from family and/or peer groups
- avoid reminders of the event
- have flashbacks, nightmares or difficulty sleeping
- regress in standards of self care
- over eat/under eat
- have difficulty with school or work
- struggle with family and peer relationships
- exhibit antisocial behaviour (like being disrespectful or destructive)
- take risks or behave dangerously
- use or abuse drugs or alcohol
- behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

“My 17-year-old was embarrassed about having flashbacks and nightmares after the accident. She said “That only happens to babies”. I found internet videos from kids who survived September 11 and she saw that the flashbacks and stress is a normal thing, for any age.”

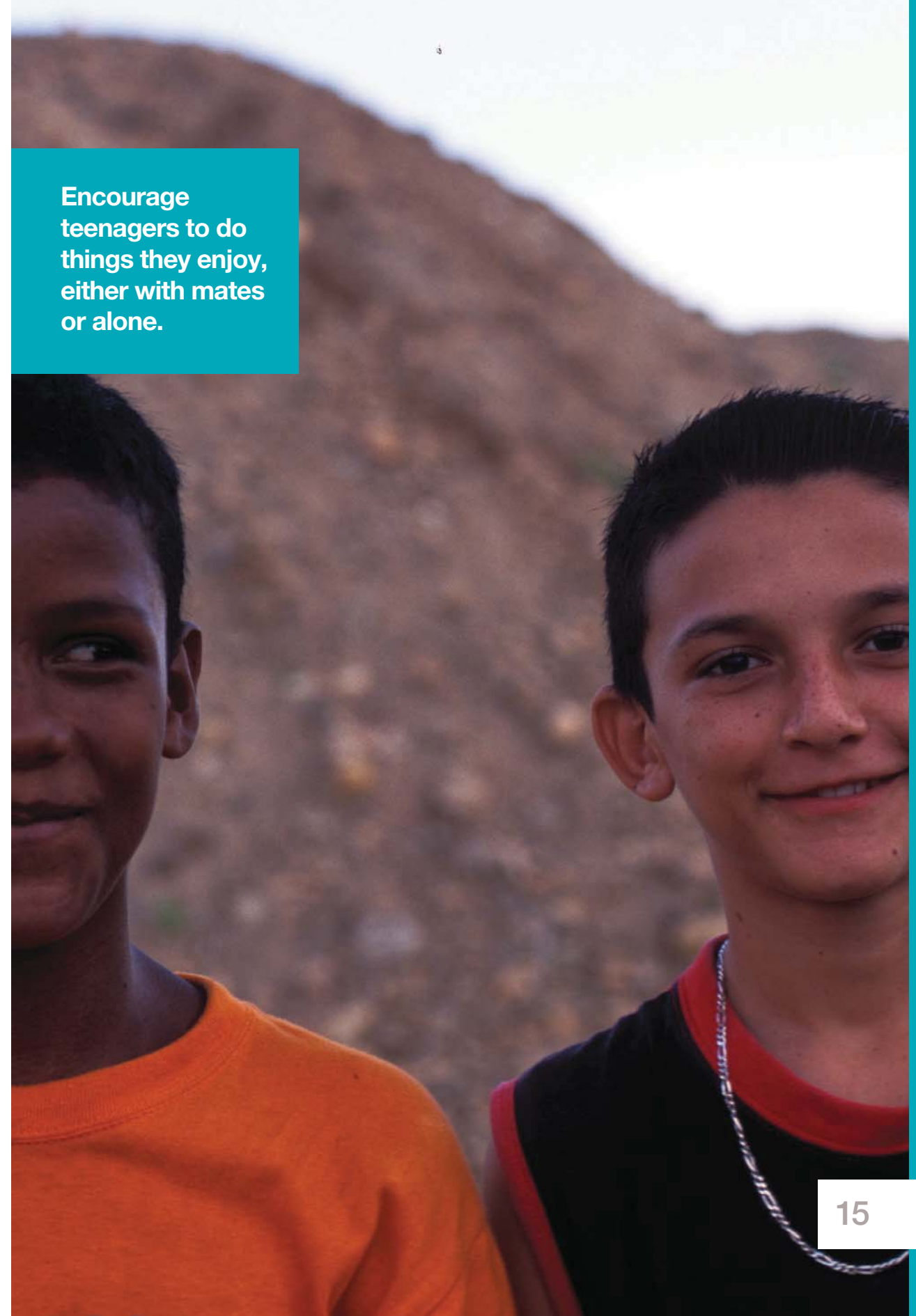
“My daughter was diagnosed with depression nine months after the fires. It lasted about three years, in varying degrees. We got help from doctors. What else worked? Writing down feelings and not giving her ‘special’ attention, especially where her friends were concerned.”

“I was 15 when our house was flooded. It was scary but sort of exciting. I helped clean up and now I know how to get ready for floods.”

“Our 13-year-old developed migraines and started playing up at school, which was out of character. For the physical stuff, the doctor suggested mild pain relief and plenty of water. For the other stuff, we tried not to get angry but we did uphold that rudeness was unacceptable. I guess we tried to treat him as a ‘normal’ teenager going through angst.”

International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies / Alfredo Saur

Encourage teenagers to do things they enjoy, either with mates or alone.



6. Reactions: 18 to 25 years

Young adults may experience any of the reactions listed on the previous pages. Other reactions may include:

- feeling a strong sense of responsibility for injury to loved ones and damage to property
- increased stress levels due to work or study commitments
- difficulty finding routine again and managing previously 'normal' tasks
- laziness or apathy
- anger or annoyance at loss of independence or privacy
- questioning one's purpose in life
- difficulty prioritising and/or managing work, study and social demands.

Young adults will have their own relationships beyond the immediate family to nurture. Some may be parents themselves. They may also have financial, workplace or other responsibilities. All children and young people, regardless of their age, need parents to set good and consistent examples, especially when life is disrupted. Ensure they have people their own age to turn to if they need extra support.


"I was 20 when my town was destroyed. After a couple of weeks, I felt like I was going crazy. I went on a long road trip and drove all day to my cousin's house. They didn't ask any questions, just took me in. I stayed for two weeks, until I felt okay to go home again. I was stronger after a little time on my own."

"Our 18-year-old's accident left him in a wheelchair. Of course he's changed but he's slowly finding a new identity, I guess. That kind of happens when you're in your twenties anyway. The best things for him have been support groups with other injured kids. We make sure his mates come over at least once a month and music, he's always loved his music. It's on all the time."

"My house wasn't burnt down, and nobody I know was killed but I was a bit messed up after the fires. We had to evacuate three times and it was really stressful. When it's really hot or when there's smoke around, I talk to mum about it. She gets it."

"Our kids weren't living here when the fires hit. But they were affected because we were affected - this is where they grew up, it's their home too. We kept them in the loop by emailing photos of the old house and the new one, sending texts about the builders. It was so good to stay connected."

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker



Young adults often struggle between the need for parental support and the desire to maintain independence.

Tell your children when they've done a good job.

Keep them in the family loop, even if they don't live at home.

7. Sleep

Many people have trouble sleeping after a crisis. Getting good sleep is a very important part of the healing process.

The following tips are relevant to you and your children.

Before sleep:

- Avoid stimulants (caffeine, energy drinks, alcohol and cigarettes) in the afternoon and evening.
- Switch off computers, TVs, mobile phones and other electronic distractions.
- Do relaxing activities that help ease you into sleep (reading, meditation, listening to soft music, breathing exercises or taking a warm bath before bed).
- Try drinking warm milk or herbal tea (without caffeine).
- Burn energy and increase tiredness at night by doing physical activities during the day.
- If it helps, write lists of activities or tasks for the following day, as a way of ending the day and planning for tomorrow.

Consider the sleeping environment:


- Make the bedroom a safe, peaceful and comfortable place.
- Keep the room dark and quiet throughout the sleeping period.
- Wear loose, clean and comfortable clothing.
- Aim to maintain routines or rituals, like singing good-night songs and ensuring children have their comforters.
- Maintain a regular pattern by going to bed and waking up at the same time each day.
- Exposure to sunlight soon after waking helps regulate the body's natural clock.

Children may have nightmares or interrupted sleeping.

Some things to remember:

- These are normal reactions to trauma and usually pass with time.
- If children are scared of sleeping, recognise their fears and let them know they are safe.
- Stay with them if necessary.
- Create a state of calmness with deep breathing or quiet talking.
- Oversleeping, or not wanting to get out of bed, may also occur.
- If you are seriously concerned, or if sleep problems continue for more than six weeks, seek advice from a doctor or child health specialist.

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

A photograph showing a woman with dark hair looking down at a young child who is lying in bed. The child is wearing a purple patterned nightgown and has their hands clasped near their face. The woman's expression is one of concern or attentiveness. The background is slightly blurred, showing a white bed frame and a pink and blue striped pillow.

Reduce distractions at bedtime. Turn off phones and computers.

Sometimes it's okay to stop what you are doing to rest. Sleep is more important than many things.

8. Looking after yourself

Children's reactions are influenced by their parents' reactions to an event. When parents look after their own health and wellbeing they are better able to look after their children.

Some tips:

- Get good rest. Sleep provides more energy, clearer thinking and helps you be more understanding.
- Watch your diet and physical health. Manage your intake of caffeine, alcohol, drugs and medication in the best interests of your child.
- Look after your relationships. Communicate with people close to you. Lean on them if you need to. Accept or ask for their support if it helps you or your children.
- Do things that make you happy. As much as possible, take part in activities and interests that make you feel good. Do these activities with and without your children.
- Stay connected with workmates, neighbours and other groups. Don't become isolated, as an individual or as a family.

"My sister stayed with us after the fires. She helped with cleaning and cooking and drove me everywhere. She was positive, strong and caring with the kids. I look back and see how good it was to have her looking after the kids. In many ways, she was looking after me too."

"I couldn't sleep at night, so I tried mini breaks during the day. I just sat down and got comfortable for a minute, took a deep breath. Just a few moments to stop and breathe helped me relax."

"After the house was damaged, it took its toll on our relationship. My wife was exhausted, stressed. I was too. We didn't talk for a while. It took time and a lot of patience."

"I was so caught up with the kids, I didn't think about what had happened to me. How did the fires affect my life, me as a person? It was a hard question to face – I was so angry about it. Just admitting that to myself cleared my head and helped me a not-so-angry mum."

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

Allow time to reflect and think about how you would like to move forward.

First take care of yourself, in order to take care of your children.



9. Helping children cope

When communicating with young people:


- 'tune in' to them and take all their concerns seriously
- be consistent, keep communicating, share information
- talk about what is happening now. This helps children feel connected and avoids feelings of isolation or misunderstanding.

Tell children:

- you love them
- the event was not their fault
- it's okay to feel upset
- they are safe and explain that you will do your best to take care of them.

How parents recover is the strongest indicator of how a child will cope.

Australian Red Cross / Stephen McIlvenna



Moving after a crisis may require time to adjust to new surroundings.

Help children regain some control and order in their lives. When appropriate, let them choose meals, pick out clothes or make other decisions in the household.

Helping children cope

Do:

- listen to what they have to say. Answer their questions
- help children understand what happened. Be honest. Use information based on facts, not rumour or hope
- reassure them about the future
- re-involve children in chores and responsibilities as soon as they can cope with them again
- try to keep normal routine (reading before bed, eating dinner together, watching TV together)
- encourage play and fun
- make time for the family to be together and enjoy each other's company. Laugh
- be open about your thoughts and feelings. Children will be aware of them anyway
- allow emotions to be shared in the family but in a way which does not overwhelm
- let children cry, hang around you or the house, be clinging or physically close
- thank and praise children when appropriate.

Don't:

- demand that children be brave or tough
- expect them to 'get over it' quickly
- expect them to take on responsibilities beyond their capability
- get angry if they show strong emotions
- force them to tell their stories or probe for personal details
- make promises you might not be able to keep
- bottle things up – try to express emotions openly, without overwhelming children
- pretend that you are okay.

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker



If you can't keep normal routines, try to make new ones together, like going for a walk, helping to prepare a meal, or gardening.

Children have great powers of recovery when understood and supported.

10. The media

The media can worry and upset young people during times of crisis. Overexposure to TV, newspaper and internet coverage during and following an event can be overwhelming and disturbing.

Things to consider:

- Not all media reports are based on facts.
- Sounds and images can be upsetting.
- Repetition of images and messages can be overwhelming and may create a false sense of danger.
- News reports can sensationalise or exaggerate events.
- Children interpret images and news through their understanding of the world. For example, they might recognise a damaged car on TV and think the car belongs to someone they know.

Where possible:

- Limit your child's access to news and media.
- Ask your child what they have seen or heard about the event.
- Clarify any misunderstandings.
- Avoid discussing news stories with other adults within the hearing of kids.

Many young people depend on social media like email, facebook or twitter, to stay connected with their friends.

Being socially connected is a good idea.

Just be mindful of overexposure.

And remind them that not everything posted online is true.

11. Suggested activities and coping strategies

Here is a list of successful ideas we collected from parents whose children have been affected by emergencies. Some suggestions are from child trauma experts. It's important to help children and young people to find the activities which THEY enjoy. These activities may also be run by other adults or older siblings to provide release time for parents and primary caregivers.

To ensure the safety and ongoing wellbeing of young people in your care, Red Cross advises that parents carry out their usual parenting care and style. Observe your children and set up boundaries around these activities, as you normally would.

Ages are intended as a guide only. Finding a suitable activity will depend on the individual child. Adult supervision and assistance may be required in some activities depending on children's ages and skills.

| Age | Activity | Benefits | Ideas |
|-----|----------|--|---|
| 2+ | Animals | <p>Playing with or caring for animals encourages young people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> empathise assist creatures that may be vulnerable adopt a sense of responsibility increase attention skills improve interactions with humans. increase self-esteem reduce loneliness. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> pets looking after stock horse riding visiting a farm, zoo or aquarium looking after pets of others |
| 3+ | Art | <p>Participating in creative arts activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows children to create, destroy and recreate is tactile, soothing and calming can be private or shared can provide sense of relief, 'getting feelings out' can be fun can be spontaneous or involve planning encourages non-literal thinking allows symbolic communication can help to document the event. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> painting drawing making (clothes, jewellery, sculpture, etc.) photography video (digital storytelling) digital art murals animation theatre and performing arts |

| Age | Activity | Benefits | Ideas |
|-----|---------------------------------|---|---|
| 5+ | Clubs/groups | <p>Participating in club or group activities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows children to 'belong' to a group involves goal-setting encourages collective sense of achievement or success encourages social interaction builds life skills often involves mentoring by positive adult role models can also encourage leadership opportunities for young people to guide others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> play group Scouts, Girl Guides, Rovers, etc. sport (pony clubs, swimming, hockey, etc.) music, dance or theatre group volunteering groups youth holiday or after school clubs |
| 5+ | Computers or digital technology | <p>Computers or digital technology are important for social connectedness (email, text, phoning, etc.) and can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> help provide sense of control be pleasurable and satisfying, especially quest or trivia games be fun encourage exploration, investigation and questioning build skills and knowledge. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> computer or video games LAN games blogging surfing the net social networking wii using programs for artistic or other projects |
| 3+ | Cooking | <p>Cooking alone or together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is rewarding (you can eat it!) contributes to the household is fun is tactile can be spontaneous or planned involves learning new skills encourages healthy living allows risk-taking or experimenting. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> preparing meals for themselves preparing meals for others cooking classes cooking parties with friends BBQs |
| 4+ | Games | <p>Playing games helps because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourages family or social connectedness is fun can be challenging or easy often involves problem-solving encourages consistency and commitment to a cause when quest-based games. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cards board games computer games orienteeing ball games puzzles mind games (crosswords, Sudoku) |

| Age | Activity | Benefits | Ideas |
|-----|-------------------|--|--|
| 3+ | Gardening | <p>Gardening is an activity that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • focuses on natural cycles of life, death and growth • helps reduce stress with fresh air and physical activity • provides sensory experiences (smell, sight, touch, sound) • is a meaningful or purposeful activity • may increase hope for the future • may increase self esteem and self confidence • is a tactile opportunity to 'get your hands dirty'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caring for existing plants • growing from seeds • planting small trees • planting herb, vegetable or flower gardens • pot plants or indoor plants • landscaping or rebuilding gardens |
| 5+ | Physical activity | <p>Sport and physical activity are known to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reduce stress • increase alertness and calmness • promote discipline • build skills • help create tiredness at night (good for sleep) • build a sense of achievement or success • encourage goal setting through healthy competition • involve celebrating wins and/or collectively dealing with loss. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • team sports • martial arts • dance • swimming and water sports • walking, running • stretching exercises • gym • Cycling, mountain biking • Horse riding |
| 2+ | Music | <p>Playing or making musical instruments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involves experimenting and learning new skills • allows for improvisation or free play • allows for emotional expression • may improve motor skills. <p>Listening to music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provides opportunity for movement and dance • provides opportunity for reflection through musical imagery • involves empathising, through lyrics, with the feelings and thoughts of others. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • go to see live bands or performances • learn a new instrument • make simple instruments, like rice shakers or saucepan drum kits • start a band with friends • have regular jam sessions • sit quietly and listen to music • create playlists for specific moods or events • play music-related computer games • explore music-making software programs • karaoke or singing sessions |

| Age | Activity | Benefits | Ideas |
|-----|---|--|---|
| 2+ | Music (cont') | <p>In general, music:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is fun • can be therapeutic, relaxing and/or stimulating • is easy to access and suits many interests and age groups • provides opportunity for reflection through imagery and lyrics • allows for verbal and non-verbal communication. | |
| 4+ | Preparedness | <p>Preparing for an emergency:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • helps children feel safer • empowers children to feel more in control of their environment • planning together helps families and groups bond • can be done at any time of the year. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making an emergency kit • removing debris or fuel • creating an emergency contacts card • developing a household plan • practising the emergency plan |
| 3+ | Relaxation techniques | <p>Getting help from professionals or guides is a good way to learn relaxation techniques that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • calming, allow the mind to rest • useful for general stress management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guided meditation • yoga • massage • deep breathing • labyrinths |
| 2+ | Reading and watching books, films or TV | <p>Children reading or being read to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is non-strenuous and relaxing • can stimulate imagination and creativity • can increase concentration levels • may include small texts or long novels. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • magazines • books • online articles, blogs, journals, etc. • TV and DVDs (with age appropriate ratings) • audio books • listening to or watching the stories of others • comics |

| Age | Activity | Benefits | Ideas |
|-----------------|-------------------|---|---|
| 5+ | Scrap booking | <p>Making a scrapbook is helpful because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeps records of treasured or important moments • can help young people accept events from the past • provides opportunities for personal or group reflection • is a form of expression. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creating books for personal memories • creating books for others • celebrating special moments (birthdays, anniversaries etc) |
| To 8 or 9 years | Unstructured play | <p>Free unstructured time for children to just 'be children':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows natural expression of thoughts and emotions • allows children to build, destroy and rebuild • is fun. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hide and seek • cubby houses • dress ups • chasings • sand play • toys • indoor and outdoor play • water play • imaginative games |
| 5+ | Volunteering | <p>Helping others is often personally rewarding because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows young people to contribute to the rebuilding process • often involves mentoring by positive adult role models • encourages social connectedness • promotes a sense of involvement and empowerment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school projects • youth groups • working with charities • working with emergency services • working with community groups |
| 7+ | Writing | <p>Creative or factual writing helps because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stimulates imagination and creativity • can be private or shared • helps rationalise thoughts • helps verbalise or describe emotions • can provide sense of relief, 'getting feelings out'. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • keeping a journal or diary • letter writing • blogging • story writing • song writing • zines or newsletters • poetry |

Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker



12. When and where to get help

Most children and young people adapt and grow through challenging or overwhelming experiences with care and support from family, friends and teachers. For a range of reasons, some children (and their families) will need assistance along the way from people skilled in understanding reactions and the journey of recovery.

You know your child best. Listening to, observing and understanding your child is the best support you can provide.

You can:

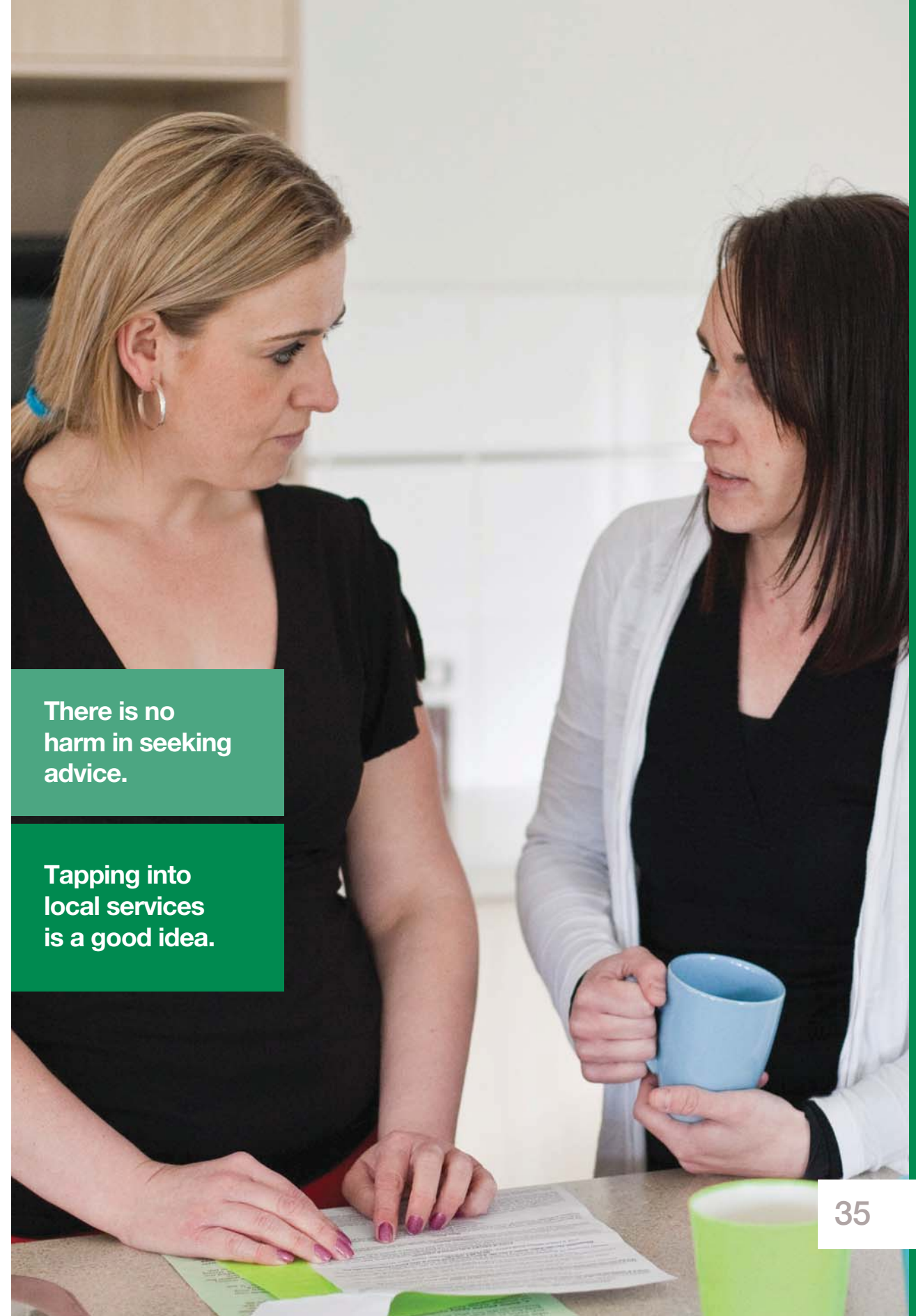
- keep your child's teacher informed and ask for feedback on their recovery
- be open to observations from close friends, family or other adults in your child's life
- try phone helplines or websites (see next page)
- get advice from a GP, nurse or other child and adolescent health professional.

If the following reactions continue, in you or your child, for more than six weeks, you may want to seek professional help.

Get advice if any family member:

- cannot perform normal routines
- develops new symptoms
- experiences persistent emotional or physical symptoms
- experiences persistent nightmares, poor sleep or flashbacks
- experiences persistent accidents or illness
- struggles with family, school or work relationships
- experiences a loss of memory and/or concentration
- performance suffers at school, work or home
- accidents or illness persist
- loses faith in themselves or the world
- develops feelings of hopelessness, despair or even suicide
- increases consumption of smoking, drinking or drugs
- develops sexual problems.

Please note: six weeks is a general time guide for most cases. If you are concerned about someone in your care, don't wait to seek help.



There is no harm in seeking advice.

Tapping into local services is a good idea.

These agencies provide information and support for people affected by crises. Remember to check with services in your local area.



Australian Red Cross / Rodney Dekker

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Australian Red Cross | <p>For children:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the emergency kids booklet • Get ready! kids booklet <p>For young people (aged 12-25):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the emergency MP3 players • After the emergency DVD <p>www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency</p> <p>For adults:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping with a major personal crisis booklet • REDiPlan booklets • Speaking to children about emergencies factsheet | www.redcross.org.au/aftertheemergency |
| Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement | Information and support for people experiencing loss and/or grief. | http://www.grief.org.au |
| Australian Centre for Post-traumatic Mental Health | Mental health and wellbeing resources, including information about traumatic events. | http://www.acpmh.unimelb.edu.au/resources/resources-community.html |
| Australian Child and Adolescent Trauma, Loss and Grief Network | For people involved in the care of children/ youth and interested in the potential impact of trauma, loss and grief experiences. | http://www.earlytraumagrief.anu.edu.au |
| Better Health Channel | Many healthy eating, exercise and relationship tips, for all ages. | http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au |
| beyondblue | Information and coping strategies for all ages across a range of mental health topics, including depression, anxiety and recovery from crises. | 1300 22 4636 http://www.beyondblue.org.au |
| headspace | Mental and health wellbeing support, information and services to young people and their families across Australia. | http://www.headspace.org.au |
| Kids Helpline | Telephone and online counselling for young people aged 5-25. | 1800 55 1800 http://www.kidshelp.com.au |
| Lifeline | 24-hour telephone crisis support. For more information or to download mental health and suicide prevention resources visit Lifeline's website. | 13 11 14 http://www.lifeline.org.au |
| Parentline | Information, advice and a listening ear for parents with any concerns about their children or parenting. | 1300 30 1300 http://www.parentline.com.au |
| Sesame Street | Support young children through tough times with a range of activities and videos from Sesame Street. | http://www.sesameworkshop.org/initiatives/emotion |

www.redcross.org.au

Red Cross national office

155 Pelham Street
Carlton South VIC 3053
Telephone: 03 9345 1800
Facsimile: 03 9348 2513

Australian Capital Territory

Cnr. Hindmarsh Drive and Palmer Street
Garran ACT 2605
Telephone: 02 6234 7600
Facsimile: 02 6234 7650

New South Wales

159 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone: 02 9229 4111
Facsimile: 02 9229 4244

Northern Territory

Lambell Terrace & Schultz Street
Larrakeyah NT 0820
Telephone: 08 8924 3900
Facsimile: 08 8924 3909

Queensland

Humanity Place 49 Park Road
Milton QLD 4064
Telephone: 07 3367 7222
Facsimile: 07 3367 7444

South Australia

207-217 Wakefield Street
Adelaide SA 5000
Telephone: 08 8100 4500
Facsimile: 08 8100 4501

Tasmania

40 Melville Street
Hobart TAS 7000
Telephone: 03 6235 6077
Facsimile 03 6231 1250

Victoria

23-47 Villiers Street
North Melbourne VIC 3051
Telephone: 03 8327 7700
Facsimile: 03 8327 7711

Western Australia

110 Goderich Street
East Perth WA 6004
Telephone: 08 9225 8888
Facsimile: 08 9325 5112