

Earthquakes

and other scary events

Earthquakes are frightening for everyone involved, and especially for children who may not understand what's happened. Long after they are over, scary experiences like earthquakes can continue to affect children's emotions, thoughts and behaviour.

A child's brain has not yet learnt to calm their fears and may continue to experience reactions long beyond a traumatic event. For example, they may regress and become more clingy, grizzly, aggressive or have trouble sleeping.



Tips for helping your child cope

- 1 Explain what happened** (for example, what aftershocks are) and spend time listening to how they feel.
- 2 Stay close** with lots of hugs for reassurance.
- 3 Keep to a familiar routine** – children feel more secure when they know what's going to happen next.
- 4 Get physical** – exercise and active games are a great stress release for kids.
- 5 Encourage creativity** – children can express their feelings through drawing and playing with toys, while singing and storytelling can be useful ways to calm fears.
- 6 Make an emergency plan if you haven't already** – get your kids involved in making a plan for what to do if the situation ever happens again.
- 7 Don't be afraid to get help** in order to ensure you are taking good care of yourself and the kids.
- 8 Be a role model** – it's important for you to model the behaviour you want to see in your kids by remaining calm even when you're not feeling it.
- 9 Try to be patient** – the effects on your child's behaviour could continue for some time – it's important to understand and support them.