



# Supporting Students During Stressful Times

Traumatic or stressful events impact every person differently. Emotional and behavioral responses can shift. It is important to monitor and support all children's coping strategies during difficult times to foster and empower their strengths.

Thankfully, any family member, teacher, or adult who works with children can be a possible source of healing and support.



## Other Helpful Tips

- Be genuine
- Be direct and developmentally appropriate
- Engage in authentic listening
- Model having tolerance for ambiguity
- Reframe and focus on the positive

## What You Can Do

### Be there

Perhaps the most important thing you can do is talk with—and listen to— your students. Let them know it is OK to ask questions. Acknowledge and validate their feelings. Let their questions guide the conversation and avoid pressuring them to talk. Find positive ways for students to be heard.

### Be calm and reassuring

How you respond to students' energy (positive or negative) can shift the behaviors in the classroom. When students see adults remain calm during stressful and difficult moments, it lets them know they are safe and supported. It is okay to not have specific answers to their questions. Help them focus on the facts and positive aspects of their community.

### Be flexible with expectations

Patience, flexibility, and extra attention can all give students the room they need to cope. This can include reminders, a slower instructional pace, or more time to complete tasks.

### Strengthen social bonds and peer support

Encourage students to be kind to one another and provide them structured opportunities for social connection.

### Be a role model

Children learn how to handle stressful situations from us. Do your best to model positive stress management strategies, such as positive self expression, acknowledging and labeling feelings, and modeling healthy coping strategies. Ideas include taking a short break, using a positive distraction, and finding a way to focus on the present moment.

### Take care of yourself

It is hard to be a good role model if you are struggling yourself. Take time to make sure you are eating and sleeping well, getting exercise, positively connecting with others, and receiving proper medical care.

### Seek professional help

If you or a student has shown signs of distress for a prolonged period of time, consider consulting with a mental health professional for support.