



# Helping Children Rebound



**Strategies for Infant & Toddler Teachers**

**By Jenna Bilmes and Cate Heroman**



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## Foreword

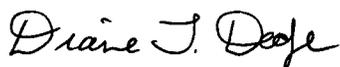
When we first learned of the devastation that hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, we felt special concern for our staff members and staff development specialists who live in southern Louisiana, as well as for the children and for the many teachers and administrators we have worked with over the years in the Gulf Coast region. After our initial relief efforts, we took some time to step back and consider our broader responsibility to the field. We felt compelled to offer additional support to our colleagues in the affected states and to those throughout the country who are welcoming displaced children and families who have lost everything.

The result is this booklet, which presents teaching strategies to support the very youngest children who experienced the hurricanes and their families. Although infants and toddlers do not fully understand the devastating events of the storms, they sense when their primary caregivers are stressed, anxious, and depressed. This booklet focuses on strategies for building the responsive relationships that help children rebound. It also suggests ways to create warm, nurturing environments and offer a variety of experiences that interest and engage children.

This guide incorporates ideas presented in *The Creative Curriculum® for Infants & Toddlers*, and the suggested practices are sound for all infant/toddler programs that are looking for ways to support children who have been affected by these hurricanes. The strategies are particularly important in helping reestablish stability in children's lives.

I am indebted to Cate Heroman, Director of Preschool/Kindergarten Initiatives at Teaching Strategies, who first thought to write this booklet. It could not have been written without the expertise of Jenna Bilmes, who is a mental health specialist with Faces of Crisis Nursery in Phoenix, Arizona and a consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense Dependent Schools and for Sonoma State University.

We hope that this booklet, and the companion guide for programs serving preschool children, will help teachers address the needs of children in crisis.



Diane Trister Dodge, President  
Teaching Strategies, Inc.



## Introduction

Hurricanes Katrina and Rita devastated hundreds of thousands of people in the southern United States. The stress and traumatic experiences have mounted over days, weeks, and months. Entire communities have been uprooted, and family members have been separated from one another or placed in cultures and environments that are unfamiliar to them. Families and communities, the two most stabilizing factors in a child's life, have been disrupted.

Infants and toddlers are not affected by devastating hurricanes in exactly the same ways as older children or adults. Very young children have no notion of the extent of the destruction or the costs of rebuilding. They can't begin to understand the scope of loss and the challenges of reconstructing lives and communities. Nevertheless, the impact of the storms on infants and toddlers is intimate and personal. Most children who have experienced traumatic events show changes in their behavior or their emotional well-being. The more threatened children feel or the more the events negatively affect their families, the more likely you are to see symptoms (Perry, 2002). Even though very young children do not fully understand the meaning of what they see and hear, they are deeply affected by the emotions of the people they rely on for love and security. As adults shift their focus from daily routines to survival, young children are very sensitive to the stress and anxiety of their primary caretakers, as well as to the disruption of the comforting rhythm of daily routines. Their beds, rooms, toys, and daily lives have gone from predictable and familiar to unpredictable and strange. These sudden environmental and social shifts and living with continued stress put infants and toddlers at risk. Prolonged stress and changes in care alter the typical development of infants (for example, motor and language development), and they may even affect brain development (Perry, 2002).

As a teacher in an infant or toddler classroom, you may have a single child in your care who has been displaced, or your school or classroom may have been damaged or completely destroyed by wind and water. Your own life might be very difficult.

Caregivers of infants and toddlers can help children recover by

- assisting children to regain their sense of security
- reestablishing a safe and orderly environment
- nurturing, supporting, and soothing distressed children
- reintroducing joy, play, and exploration to their lives

This guide is designed to support you as you help children. We hope that it gives you practical strategies for supporting infants, toddlers, and their families through these very traumatic times.

## *How do child development theory and research help us understand and respond to infants and toddlers?*

During the first three years of life, infants and toddlers are developing a sense of self and learning to trust others. Through their interactions with you and their families, they gain answers to questions such as these:

- Do people respond to me?
- Can I depend on other people when I need them?
- Am I important to others?
- Am I competent?
- How should I behave?
- Do people enjoy being with me?
- What should I be afraid of?
- Is it safe for me to move and explore?
- Is it safe for me to show how I feel?
- What interests me?

A child's relationship with a significant adult is the foundation for development and learning. That adult has the major responsibility for the child's daily care. Their relationship serves as a child's "home base." At home, one or more of the adult family members is usually the significant adult for the child. If you care for children in a family child care setting, you are probably each child's significant adult when the child is not with her own family. In center-based care, a child is sometimes assigned to a significant adult or a special relationship develops naturally. These one-on-one relationships are the basis for children's feelings of security and their positive sense of self.

Many children who experienced the hurricane and its aftermath have had to spend time with unfamiliar caretakers. Some families have had to leave their infants and toddlers with family members out of state while they either rode out the storm or returned to their homes to survey the damage and salvage what they could. Some families have changed care providers because their familiar providers have to address their own needs at this stressful time. Other children are being cared for by familiar adults, but the adults are having difficulty coping with their changed circumstances. With these changes, some children are overwhelmed by a sense of chaos and do not know how to handle their feelings in positive ways.

As we more closely examine what infants and toddlers are learning about their worlds, we can begin to identify how traumatic events, such as the hurricanes, can interfere with normal growth and development.

What children do and learn	How we typically support development and learning	Challenges caused by traumatic events
Children make sense of their world through relationships with significant others and through the routines of daily life	Provide consistent, responsive caretakers; maintain regular routines	<p>Children may be cared for by unfamiliar adults.</p> <p>Routines are disrupted or rushed.</p> <p>Adults may not be able to respond as quickly as usual to children's needs.</p>
Children develop a sense of security and trust	Keep life consistent and predictable; adults respond to children's physical and emotional needs	<p>Each day brings new changes: a different place to live, different people to live with, different people at school.</p> <p>Survival demands overwhelm adults and leave few emotional reserves to respond thoughtfully to children.</p>
Children explore and discover	Provide safe places for children to explore; offer new materials to explore	<p>Unsafe environments might cause adults to confine children in playpens or cribs for long periods of time.</p> <p>Urgent needs may take priority over providing children with interesting playthings.</p>
Children develop connections with their families and cultural communities	Support children's interactions with immediate and extended families, peers, neighbors, and other community members	Many people have been relocated or displaced. Children may be getting to know entirely new sets of people.
Children begin to develop self-help skills	Give children time, opportunity, and support to learn to dress, feed, wash, and groom themselves.	Chaotic living situations may encourage caretakers to do things for children instead of allowing them to do things themselves. (Note: providing more support than usual is appropriate and necessary when children's self-help skills regress in response to stress.)

## *What happens during a tragedy that interrupts children's development?*

Infants and toddlers have a hard time adjusting to change and loss. When infants and toddlers experience the stresses of a severe hurricane, their secure bases are often lost. They may have had to leave their familiar surroundings. Their families may have been temporarily separated or unable to respond to some of their needs. Toddlers are just developing coping skills. They don't usually have the language to express their feelings.

Infants and toddlers react to stress in different ways and recover at different rates. The degree to which they are affected depends on many factors. Consider these questions as you respond to the children in your care:

- Did the child experience a single disruption, such as a move to grandma's house, or was there a series of traumatic events, such as escaping a flooding house, living in a shelter, being separated from a primary caretaker, and going without food or water?
- Did the child witness fear, pain, and destruction?
- Did the child's traumatic experiences last for a few hours, or did they continue for weeks?
- Is the child's primary caretaker anxious, stressed, depressed, or physically harmed?
- Has the child's family structure been disrupted?
- Is the child's daily life chaotic and unpredictable?
- Are family members overwhelmed?



## *How do infants and toddlers behave after a traumatic event?*

Infants and toddlers who have experienced trauma may show signs of stress, anxiety, and depression. It is important to keep in mind that, while the physical experience of a storm or other disaster affects very young children, the stress and grief of primary caretakers and the disruption of regular routines have the biggest impact. For many infants and toddlers, trauma is ongoing as their families struggle to reestablish their lives.

As you care for infants and toddlers, you may see these common signs of stress, anxiety, and depression:

*unusual fear of being away from significant adult*

*clinging*

*crying*

*not calming when the usual sources of comfort for the child are offered*

*pulling own hair, rocking back and forth, banging head*

*eating less than usual or more than usual*

*trouble falling asleep*

*trouble staying asleep*

*whining*

In addition to the signs of stress and anxiety listed above, you may also see some of the following challenging behaviors of toddlers as a response to the trauma caused by the hurricanes:

*acting out scary themes, such as monsters*

*getting upset easily*

*hitting or kicking others*

*losing some skills, e.g., wetting after a period of successful toilet learning; sucking thumb after having stopped; wanting a bottle after being weaned*

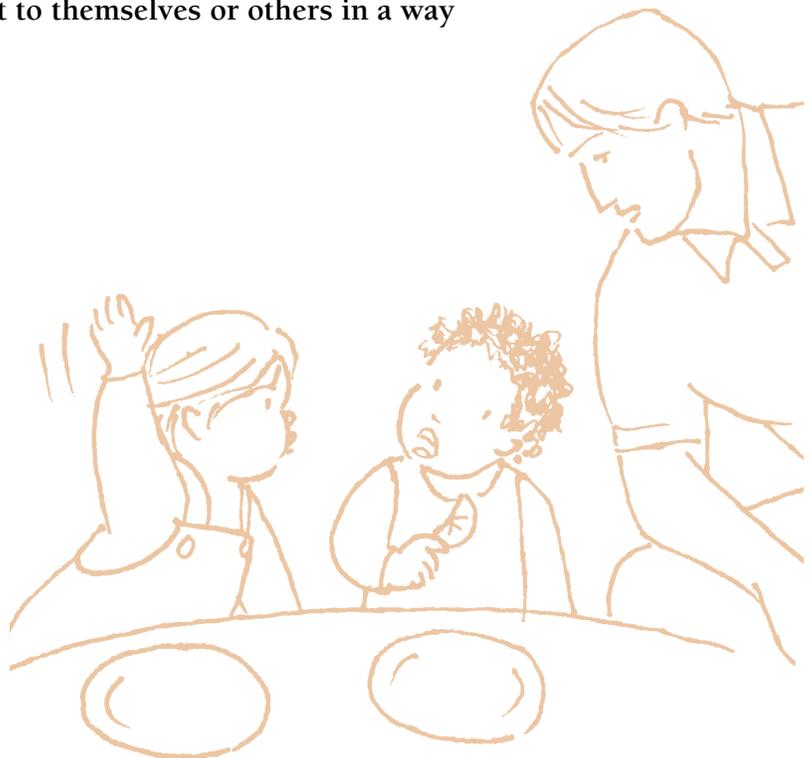
*playing alone; withdrawing from others*

*replaying scenarios about specific events, e.g., repeatedly throwing items into boxes*

Older toddlers might also change their play patterns. In the weeks following a traumatic event, toddlers' play activities may involve reenacting aspects of the event, sometimes again and again. Replaying an incident or memory over and over is the toddler's way of trying to make sense of his world. The details that a toddler replays are often small parts of a larger event. For example, you might see a toddler treating a baby doll roughly, or a toddler might repeatedly dump toys she previously played with in a more complex manner. Over time, you should see toddlers expand their play themes again and spend less and less time replaying just one or two details of their experience. Whether you observe a progression of play will give you some insight about how well individual children are adjusting.

Symptoms of children's stress may be intermittent. When you record your observations, you can look for patterns. Although most children can recover from traumatic experiences with the help of caring and supportive family members and teachers, some children have a harder time rebounding. It is estimated that 39% of the children exposed to trauma will meet the criteria for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (K. E. Fletcher, 2002). In one study of 175 Head Start children following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, 16.5% were reported as showing symptoms of PTSD 12 months after the storm, and 11.6% had symptoms 18 months after the hurricane. PTSD places young children at increased risk for failure to achieve normal development in cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Delameter & Applegate, 1996).

**If a child's level of distress appears to be staying the same or becoming more intense, it is important to seek expert advice. Of course, it is always wise to consult with an expert if children pose a physical threat to themselves or others in a way that you cannot manage.**



## How can adults support children's recovery from trauma?

The negative effects of hardship can be alleviated, and children can develop the strength and skills necessary to deal with adversity. Infants and toddlers can develop resiliency when they spend time in safe, supportive environments; have relationships with caring, supportive adults; have opportunities to develop self-control; have experiences in which they feel competent; and are taught with strategies that help them become successful learners.

Some toddlers express their anxiety through aggressive play or by hitting, kicking, or biting others. Adults can help toddlers reduce their anxiety by directing them to soothing activities such as these:

*water play*

*sand play*

*playdough*

*blowing bubbles*

*cutting paper*

*books*

*dancing to music*

*finger painting*

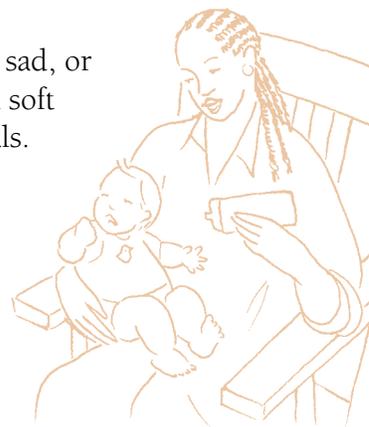
*calming music, especially  
classical music*

After a traumatic event, familiar activities are most helpful. Do not introduce many new things at one time. Think about postponing more stressful activities, such as field trips, until normal life is reestablished at the program and at children's homes.

Create cozy areas where children may go when they feel stressed, angry, sad, or fearful. Make the area warm, inviting, and homelike, and furnish it with soft items such as beanbag chairs, cushions, soft blankets, and stuffed animals.

### Relationships

Infants and toddlers who have been through the trauma of a hurricane rely on you as their secure base. They will often want to cling or stay close to you as they try to cope. Hold and comfort children when they cry or otherwise appear distressed. Give children the physical comfort they crave by sitting close together and hugging them or rubbing their backs. This extra cuddling and comforting is not "giving in" or "spoiling" the children. In fact, the more responsive adults are to children's need for extra comforting, the more likely children are to regain a sense of security.



Children sense the way you feel. Try to be patient and calm, and speak in quiet tones. Include good and happy experiences and activities. Laugh and be silly together. Smile a lot. Be kind, and guide children's behavior so that they know you are in control of their care.

## **Routines**

Children's worlds have been shattered. Research tells us that reestablishing regular routines may be more important than any other intervention (Blaufarb & Levine, 1972; Gordon & Wraith, 1993; Prinstein, LaGreca, Vernberg, & Silverman, 1996; Terr, 1994; Vogel & Vernberg, 1993). Comfort children and help them feel safe and secure by having a consistent, predictable daily schedule and regular routines. A familiar daily schedule helps reassure children that life is still predictable and that things are returning to normal. Change often triggers anxiety when children are coping with stress. Before transitioning to a new activity, it is now particularly important to let children know what will happen next.

## **Hellos and good-byes**

After a traumatic event it is common for children who have been doing well with separations to regress for a while. Children may become clingy and weepy at arrival time. If children have trouble separating, help parents reestablish a regular, predictable good-bye routine. Take pictures of children with their families, if possible, and display them where children can see them easily. Allow children to keep pictures in their cubbies or pockets. Remember that many of their photos may have been destroyed or lost in the hurricane. It is sometimes helpful for parents to leave a personal item for their child to keep in her cubby as well. Some children may need to carry a special comfort item with them throughout the day. Planning a few simple and engaging activities, such as playdough or table blocks, helps children get settled when they arrive.

## **Diapering and toileting**

Lack of control over toileting is common for stressed toddlers. Children who have been staying dry during the day may begin to wet their pants again, and children who had begun toilet learning may no longer be willing to participate. During and after the storm, parents may have put toddlers back into diapers because of problems in finding toilets as often as necessary and because they did not have the time and energy needed for toileting toddlers. During the storm and immediately afterwards, diapers might not have been available, so toddlers may have gotten into the habit of wetting their "big kid" underwear.

Because of their experiences, some toddlers may also develop a fear of the rushing water of toilets or sinks. Continue to reassure children that they are safe and wait for them to be ready to use the toilet again. Playing with toddlers at the water table may help them regain their confidence around water.

## **Eating and mealtimes**

Changes in eating patterns are not uncommon for distressed children. Eating is one of the few areas where young children have a sense of control. Some infants and toddlers may respond to the trauma of the hurricane by refusing to eat, becoming picky about food, overeating, hoarding food, or asking you to feed them rather than feeding themselves. Reassure children that you will find food for them whenever they are hungry, even if it is not the usual time to eat. Meet toddlers' needs for nurturing by spoon-feeding them if they wish. If adults avoid focusing or commenting on feeding problems, children typically resolve these issues quickly on their own. If feeding problems continue and the child's health appears to be at risk, suggest to the family that they consult their health-care provider.

## **Rest times**

Sleep disruptions are not uncommon during stressful times. Children who never had trouble at rest time before may resist napping. Some distressed children become hyperaroused and cannot sleep even though they are tired. They may be afraid when the lights are turned off and may startle at unexpected noises. Children might worry that adults will leave them alone in the room. Some children may be very tired because they are living in shelters or sharing living spaces where they cannot get the rest they need. They may doze during story time or mealtime or may be so overtired that they have trouble falling asleep during regular rest times.

Infants and toddlers who are anxious and stressed often need help to relax enough to fall asleep. Children who have been able to fall asleep by themselves may need additional attention until their worlds settle down again. Some of the following techniques might help them relax:

- Offer toddlers familiar comfort items. (However, pillows, fluffy blankets, fleeces, stuffed animals, rattles, and squeeze toys should be removed from infant cribs for safety reasons.)
- Play soft music.
- Rub or pat backs or bottoms rhythmically.
- Sing lullabies, even if you can't carry a tune. Your voice is a great comfort to the children for whom you care.
- Hum a monotonous tone over and over.
- Rock an infant in your arms or a stroller.
- Stand and cradle an infant with her face between your neck and shoulder while you sway or rock.
- Carry an infant in a sling.
- Avoid eye contact with infants while trying to help them fall asleep, because infants find eye contact stimulating.
- Reassure toddlers that grownups will stay in the room to take care of them the entire time they are sleeping.

Maintain consistent routines but be prepared to adapt them to the needs of individual children. Some infants and toddlers will not be able to fall or stay asleep even with your help. When a young child can't sleep, it is still important to provide a quiet period so children can rest. You might give a toddler a book to look at or some crayons and paper for drawing. An infant can be rocked quietly in an infant swing or stroller, or she can play in a soft, supervised play area of the room with cuddly toys, baby books, and infant mirrors, either by herself or with you. The key is to find a gentle, quiet, minimally stimulating activity to engage the child so that he can rest his mind and body.

## **Getting dressed**

Toddlers who have been dressing themselves might regress and ask for more help from adults. If a toddler becomes more distressed when you encourage her to put on her socks by herself, it is a sign that she needs your support during this traumatic time in her life. Helping children with normal caretaking routines helps children rebuild their sense of trust and security. As life settles, toddlers will once again assert their independence.

## **Activities and Experiences**

Toddlers use their play to explore and make sense of their world. Children's play will often tell you what is on their minds, even when they lack language to express their ideas and feelings verbally.

After a traumatic event, you may notice toddlers using classroom materials to reenact details of their experiences. For example, toddlers who had to be rescued from their flooded houses might weave the theme of uncontrolled water into many facets of their play. They might put table toys into the water table. They might purposefully dump the water during a water painting activity. You might see them toss things about randomly in the home living center. When watching and guiding toddlers' play after a traumatic event, it is helpful to have information from the family about the child's recent experiences. However, you do not want to have adult conversations about scary events when children can hear you. Information about the child's experiences should be shared in person or by phone when children are not present.

## **Toys**

Some children may have lost many of their toys, either during the storm or the relocation. Familiar toys at school help children continue to explore and learn while their home lives are being reconstructed. Cause-and-effect toys, such as busy boxes and musical toys that respond to touch, help babies and toddlers reestablish a sense of predictability and control. Simple puzzles also help some young children regain a sense of order and structure.

## **Art**

Open-ended art experiences provide toddlers with opportunities to explore their emotions with or without verbal language. The physical properties of some art materials, such as dough or finger paint, are soothing and calming. Other activities, such as drawing or painting on large sheets of paper, give children a way to express their powerful emotions with large body movements.

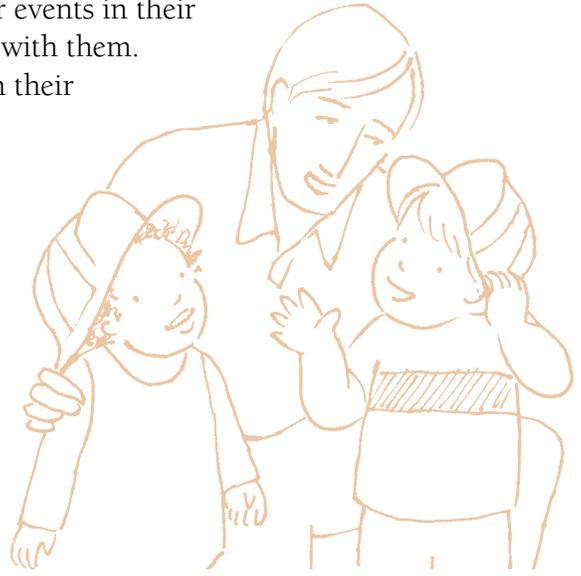
## **Stories and books**

Toddlers who are anxious or stressed enjoy reading the same books again and again. Familiar activities help young children feel a sense of control and predictability. This is a good time to invite toddlers to sit close to you as you read together.

## Pretending

If toddlers talk about the storm, the water, the flood, or other events in their play, it is appropriate and supportive to talk about the storm with them. However, if children are not using hurricane-related words in their play, it is best to avoid talking directly about the storm when you respond.

Help toddlers communicate their feelings and experiences by providing a wide variety of props, such as suitcases, crates, empty food containers, toy boats and rescue vehicles, shopping carts, and community helper props. Join the play if the child appears distressed or aggressive. Comment on what the child is doing and help her calm herself. For example, if a toddler is throwing home living props out of the area and shouting, “Run! Run!” you might join his play. You might say, “I’ll help you. Let’s put some things into this baby stroller,” and guide the child to more positive activity. As you are filling the stroller, you might say, “As soon as we have our things, we will find a new place to live.” When the stroller is filled, you might say, “OK, we’re ready now. Where shall we go?” and help the child pretend to move to another place. Your calm response will model a constructive way for toddlers to manage stress.



## Tasting and preparing food

You may notice that some toddlers are hoarding food or appear to be overeating at the program. This may reflect disrupted mealtimes or food scarcity during evacuation. Support children by making sure that it is obvious that there is enough food at school for children whenever they are hungry, even between typical mealtimes.

For a variety of reasons, some infants and toddlers refuse food or eat less when they are upset. If this happens, the following tips might help:

- Continue to offer frequent healthy meals and snacks throughout the day.
- Resist the inclination to urge or bribe the child to eat. If the child refuses food by spitting it out, turning her head, or throwing food on the floor, casually end the meal and offer food again in half an hour to an hour.
- Sit and eat with the toddler, modeling enjoyment of the meal.
- Serve tiny portions.
- Include at least one of the child’s favorite foods at each meal, such as a cracker or cut fruit. Do not withhold the favored food as a reward for eating other foods.
- Avoid expressing anxiety about the child’s eating pattern. A casual approach helps reduce a child’s anxiety about eating.

## **Sand and water**

Sand and water play and other sensory experiences, such as playing with shaving cream, soothe many children. Some toddlers throw these materials in an effort to release pent-up emotions. It is often helpful for an adult to join the play and to model more soothing use of the materials. If a child continues playing overactively, calmly guide the child to another play area and help the child to engage in another activity.

## **Music and movement**

Music and dance can bring a classroom community together. Including songs that are familiar to families gives infants and toddlers an activity to enjoy together and soothes them at the same time. Ask families what music or songs their children know and love. Soft instrumental music often has a calming effect and decreases children's anxiety. Play it upon arrival or at rest time, to create a calm atmosphere in the classroom.

## **Outdoors**

All children need daily time outdoors for their health and well-being. Toddlers who are anxious or stressed need time outside more than ever. Running, jumping, climbing, and even screaming can help toddlers release tension, stress, and anxiety. It may take a while for some toddlers to feel secure outside after a storm. They may need to stand close to you and not venture off by themselves. It is normal and healthy for toddlers to rely on you as their secure base. Be patient and know that the child will eventually venture out to play on his own again as he begins to feel more safe and secure.

Toddlers may enjoy cardboard boxes, crates, and foam blocks that are safe for children to use for structures and to knock down. They may also enjoy pretending to hide and having you find them. Don't be surprised if children repeat this hiding and finding activity again and again. Pretending to be "lost" and "found" is comforting for young children.

## *How can you support families in helping their children recover from the crisis?*

Life for families recovering from a hurricane is stressful. In addition to the damage to or loss of their homes, jobs, and even loved ones, families must also care for their children. Infants and toddlers may have trouble going to sleep, sleeping through the night, and getting up in the morning. They may be afraid to sleep alone, or the family may be living in a shelter where it is difficult to sleep. The children may be afraid of water and therefore fearful about taking a bath or shower. Understandably, a child who was close to the disaster may have trouble separating when she arrives at school. When the child cannot hear your conversation, talk with her parents and find out about her behavior away from school so, as a team, you can help the child recover from the trauma of the hurricane.

Infants' worlds are shaped by their primary caretakers. The extent to which children are affected by and able to cope with traumatic events is related to their parents' response to the disaster (Green et al., 1991; Richman, 1992). When family members are anxious, exhausted, stressed, depressed, or preoccupied, infants and toddlers suffer higher levels of stress and anxiety. Supporting family members as they work through their own reactions to the hurricanes is an important part of helping children (Perry, 2002). "When staff members listen to, nurture, and support parents, parents are better able to provide support and nurturing to their children" (Parlakain & Seibel, 2001).

When children arrive at school, listen to the immediate concerns of family members. Allow them to take their time in separating from their child. Make sure that family members understand how important it is to tell their child when they are leaving and where they are going. You and the family members need to reassure the children that their families will return and that you will take good care of them while their families are away.

Be mindful of making too many demands on family members. They may not have the financial or emotional resources to participate in their child's school life as much as they did before. Invite them to be involved in their child's day, but be understanding if they decline your invitations for a while.

Share information with families about how their child is progressing and adapting. Give family members photos taken at school to display at their new residences, to replace pictures that were destroyed or lost.

Meet with parents and help them understand the signs of children's stress and anxiety and to recognize whether they need professional assistance, themselves. Encourage parents to hold and comfort their child as much as possible, especially when he or she is crying or upset. Advise them to turn off the television when their children are nearby, to protect their children from troubling images and frightening stories about disasters.

Help parents become aware of the importance of consistent care during stressful times. Remind parents that distressed children often regress temporarily to more immature behaviors and that this is to be expected. For example, children may begin to wet their pants again or ask for a bottle even though they have been drinking successfully from a cup.

Give families ideas about how to help children regain their sense of safety and security.

## Helping Your Child Cope With Traumatic Events

### Establish Routines

- Take charge of your child's care, even while you are facing continuing uncertainties. Establishing routines and limits for your child's behavior helps assure him that an adult is in charge and that you will keep him safe.
- Maintain regular daily routines and let your child know what will happen next during the day, to the extent that you are able.
- When you separate from your child, let her know where you are going, when you will come back, and who will take care of her while you are gone.
- Reestablish community ties, such as by taking your child to a children's program offered by a local library or your religious organization. However, if you cannot stay with your child during such programs, be mindful of how often and for how long you leave him in the care of others, so that you can balance his need for your company with your need to participate in activities that do not include him.

### Listen, Watch, and Respond

- Listen to and watch your child to figure out what she needs. Some children need to be active; others need to be held or to stay close to you. Following their lead will not "spoil" them. It will help them feel safe and secure at a time when their worlds are upside-down.
- Pay attention to your child's feelings, and name them to let him know you understand. Reassure your child and tell him that it is still all right to be afraid, sad, and confused.
- Answer your child's questions according to her level of understanding.

### Understand Challenging Behavior

- Be patient and calm, especially when your child is clingy, whiny, or aggressive.
- Expect and understand that your child's behavior might regress in some ways.
- Protect your child from seeing troubling media images, and do not hold adult conversations about frightening events when your child can hear you.

### Enjoy Being Together

- Say that you will keep him safe, even when things are scary. Use very simple language.
- Do things together that you both enjoy. Laughing, being silly, and cuddling can relieve stress for both you and your child. Doing familiar things with your child, like singing a song you both know, will help your child feel as though life is returning to normal.
- Talk about what is going well.

## Taking Care of Yourself

To be able to care for children, it is very important to take care of yourself. Not only are you responsible for caring for young children who have been through a traumatic experience, but you may also be healing and coping with displacement, the loss of your home, the loss of a family member or friend, separation from those close to you, or missing your neighborhood and culture.

For children to recover, they need adults who are physically and emotionally available and supportive. To help others, you need to be safe, rested, and in good mental health. Seek help if you need it. The National Mental Health Information Center ([www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)) offers the following tips for recognizing signs of stress, burnout, and the need to get support from others:

- depression, irritability, anxiety, hyperexcitability, excessive rage, etc.
- physical exhaustion, loss of energy, gastrointestinal distress, appetite disturbances, hypochondria, sleep disorders, muscle tremors
- hyperactivity, excessive fatigue, inability to express self (orally or in writing)
- slowness of thought, inability to make decisions, loss of objectivity in evaluating and functioning, external confusion, etc.

If you recognize these symptoms, find ways to relieve stress. Talk with others and share your experiences. In staff meetings, set aside time to discuss your personal responses to the disaster and share ideas about how to assist children and parents in managing their responses. Teaching is a demanding job. Learning to cope with your own responses to a disaster as well as your children's may sometimes be overwhelming. Staff members can help each other keep stress at a manageable level.

For more information about responding to mental health needs in times of crisis, or to find out about local mental health services, contact the United States Department of Health and Human Services call center at 1-800-789-2647.





## *Books and Music for Infants and Toddlers\**

The lists below include songs, activities, and books to soothe and amuse babies and toddlers as they try to understand the images and feelings brought on by the hurricanes.

### **Books for Infants**

Infants need to hear their caregivers' voices and to have many rich language experiences. They also need to develop their eyes by focusing on objects and pictures with strong color contrast. These books give a teacher new and familiar things to talk about while the baby focuses on the illustrations. You can hold an infant on your lap so the child can see the pictures and so the teacher can guide the baby's hand to touch the books.

### **Black and White Illustrations**

*Baby Animals: Black and White* by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes

*Black on White* by Tana Hoban

*What Is That?* by Tana Hoban

*White on Black* by Tana Hoban

*Who Are They?* by Tana Hoban

### **Bold Illustrations**

*Animal Noises* by Stephen Cartwright

*Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin, Jr.

*Color Farm* by Lois Ehlert

*Pet Animals* by Lucy Cousins

*My Car* by Byron Barton

### **Baby Faces**

*Baby Face* by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes

*Eat (Baby Faces series)* by Roberta Grobel Intrater

*How Sweet It Is To Be Loved by You (Motown Baby Love Board Book series)*  
by Charles R. Smith, Jr.

*Peekaboo Baby (Look Baby! series)* by Margaret Miller

\* From *Books and Music for Infants, Toddlers and their Caregivers after Hurricanes and Other Disasters*, by the State Library of Louisiana, Baton Rouge, LA: Author. Copyright 2005. Adapted with permission.

## Books for Toddlers

There are hundreds of wonderful books for toddlers, and those listed below celebrate the wonder and uniqueness of each child. When you interact with toddlers as suggested in the books, children feel special and loved.

*A You're Adorable* by Buddy Kaye, Fred Wise, and Sidney Lippman

*Baby Dance* by Ann Taylor

*Busy Fingers* by C. W. Bowie

*Busy Toes* by C. W. Bowie

*Can I Have a Hug?* by Debi Gliori

*Counting Kisses: A Kiss and Read Book* by Karen Katz

*Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown

*Here Are My Hands* by Bill Martin, Jr.

*Hush Little Baby* by Sylvia Long

*I Love You Baby from Head to Toe!* by Karen Pandell

*Just Like Me* by Miriam Schlein

*"More, More, More," Said the Baby* by Vera B. Williams

*Pretty Brown Face* by Andrea Davis Pinkney

*The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown

*Ten Little Fingers* by Annie Kubler

*Ten, Nine, Eight* by Molly Bang

*Tickly Under There* by Debi Gliori

*Toes, Ears & Nose!: A Lift-the-Flap Book* by Marion Dane Bauer

*What Does Baby Say?* by Karen Katz

*Where Is Baby's Belly Button?* by Karen Katz

*Will You Carry Me?* by Heleen van Rossum

## ***Books and Music for Infants and Toddlers, continued***

### **Music**

Singing lullabies and playing soft music often helps calm infants and toddlers.

### **Lullabies**

*A Child's World of Lullabies* by Hap Palmer

*Dream a Dream* by Mary Stahl

*Lullabies for Little Dreamers* by Kevin Roth

*The Baby Record* by Bob McGrath

*Wee Sing Nursery Rhymes and Lullabies* by Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp

### **Gentle Music**

*Baby's First Classics, Volume 1, 2, and 3* by various artists, St. Clair Records

*Baby's First Guitar Music* by various artists, St. Clair Records

*Quiet Places and Seagulls* by Hap Palmer

### **Playful Songs and Nursery Rhymes: Recordings**

*Babysongs and More Babysongs* by Hap Palmer

*Early, Early Childhood Songs* by Ella Jenkins

*Peek-A-Boo and So Big* by Hap Palmer

*Songs and Games for Toddlers* by Bob McGrath

*Tiny Tunes* by Carole Peterson

*Wee Sing and Pretend* by Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp

*Wee Sing Children's Songs and Fingerplays* by Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp

*Wee Sing for Baby* by Pamela Conn Beall and Susan Hagen Nipp

### **Songs and Nursery Rhymes: Resource Books for Caregivers**

*I Love You Rituals* by Becky A. Bailey

*The Book of Bounces* by John M. Feierabend

*The Book of Simple Songs & Circles* by John M. Feierabend

*The Book of Tapping & Clapping* by John M. Feierabend

*The Book of Wiggles & Tickles* by John M. Feierabend

## ***Resources and Web Sites***

### **Child Care Exchange**

*Helping Children when Catastrophe Strikes* by Jim Greenman

[www.childcareexchange.com/resources/katrina/greenman\\_katrina.pdf](http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/katrina/greenman_katrina.pdf)

### **Embrace Mississippi Hurricane Relief**

<http://embracehurricanerelief.org/>

### **Exchange Every Day**

*Helping Children Cope with Katrina*

[http://ccie.com/eed/news\\_print.php?news\\_id=1274](http://ccie.com/eed/news_print.php?news_id=1274)

### **FEMA for Kids**

[www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids)

### **Mercy Corps**

[www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)

### **Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood**

*Helping Children with Tragic Events in the News*

[www.misterrogers.org/families/](http://www.misterrogers.org/families/)

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

*Helping Young Children After a Disaster*

[www.naeyc.org/families/disaster.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/families/disaster.asp)

### **National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**

[www.naccrra.org](http://www.naccrra.org)

### **National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)**

*Helping Children Cope with a Crisis: A Workbook for African American Families*

[www.nbcdi.org/programs/aapp/aapp.asp](http://www.nbcdi.org/programs/aapp/aapp.asp)

**National Center for Post-Traumatic Distress Disorder**

*Tips for Helping Preschool Children After a Disaster*

[www.ncptsd.va.gov/pfa/Pre\\_School\\_Children.pdf](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/pfa/Pre_School_Children.pdf)

**National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives**

[www.ruralec.msstate.edu/](http://www.ruralec.msstate.edu/)

**National Mental Health Association**

*Coping with Tragedy: After Hurricane Katrina*

[www.nmha.org/reassurance/hurricane/children.cfm](http://www.nmha.org/reassurance/hurricane/children.cfm)

**National Mental Health Information Service**

*Reaction of Children to a Disaster*

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN01-0101/default.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN01-0101/default.asp)

***Helping Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety***

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp)

**Redleaf Press**

*Responding to the Emotional Needs of Children Dislodged by Hurricane Katrina*

by Barbara Oehlberg, author of *Making It Better: Activities for Children Living in a Stressful World*

[www.redleafpress.org/client/archives/articles/rl\\_Sept2005\\_article1.cfm](http://www.redleafpress.org/client/archives/articles/rl_Sept2005_article1.cfm)

**Save the Children**

[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

**Southern Early Childhood Association**

[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

**U.S. Department of Education's Hurricane Help for Schools**

[www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov](http://www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov)

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### **About Teaching Strategies, Inc.**

Founded in 1988, the mission of Teaching Strategies, Inc. is to enhance the quality of early childhood programs by offering the highest-quality curriculum materials, training programs, parenting resources, and staff development services that are practical, developmentally appropriate, responsive to the needs of the field, and reflect the most innovative thinking.

### **For more information**

Parents and teachers can learn more by visiting the Teaching Strategies Web site:  
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