

# Activities

## First Responders

Emerging  
Minds.

### Instructions

All activities provided are optional resources. Facilitators should review the activities and include or omit as they consider relevant to their respective audiences.

Recommended placement of activities is noted in the facilitator's handbook and in the notes of the provided slide presentations.

**It is recommended that at least one activity is included per presentation and delivery times have been calculated to incorporate at least 15 mins of activities (i.e. 1–2 activities per session).**

Trainers can further extend sessions by including more activities if desired.

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### Activity 1: Reflection and discussion: Children in natural disaster events

Duration:  
5–15 mins

**Aim:** To encourage participant engagement and sharing of experience. This activity is mainly about building engagement with and between the participants. Don't force any responses here. If no-one has any experience of working with children in a natural disaster, just move on through the slides. If someone has (and is happy to share their experience), ask them to provide details and use prompting questions if required to determine how the experience of working with children may have been different to that of working with adults.

**Resources:** Nil

**Instructions:** Ask the participants if anyone has had direct experience of working with children in a natural disaster event. If yes, are they willing to share a little about their experience?

Depending on how forthcoming the participants are, you may use some prompts to get further information, such as:

- *Did you feel there was anything different in managing children versus managing adults?*
- *Did the child or children act in a similar or different way to adults?*
- *Did you personally find it challenging to work with children?*

## Activity 2: Reflection and discussion: Potential longer-term impacts of natural disasters

Duration:  
5–15 mins

**Aim:** Generate thought about how natural disasters can impact children's wellbeing, even well after the immediate response is complete.

**Resources:** Whiteboard

**Instructions:** Ask participants:

1. *What are some of the potential longer-term impacts that natural disasters can have on a community? Consider financial, social and emotional impacts.*
2. *How could these impact or create stress for children in the community?*

Examples:

- Temporary accommodation arrangements.
- Overcrowded or separate living arrangements.
- Loss of family income.
- Loss of business.
- Loss of social networks such as friends and family moving away.
- Loss of community meeting places.
- Loss of loved ones.
- Loss of treasured items.

Note these responses on the whiteboard. Ask participants to consider these responses and then comment on how they might impact on the children in the community.

3. *How might these impact on children in the community?*

Example: A family business suffers economic distress following a disaster > parents begin to suffer emotionally (e.g. depression) from the losses associated with the disaster > children may subsequently begin to demonstrate symptoms of distress.

## Activity 3: Reflection and discussion: Child trauma responses

Duration:  
5–10 mins

**Aim:** To encourage participant engagement and sharing of experiences.

**Resources:** Nil

**Instructions:** Instructions: Ask participants if they have any personal experience of seeing trauma reactions in children that they are willing to share confidentially. (Stress the need to de-identify information so that the child cannot be identified by others).

- *What changes did you see in the child?*
- *Did you do/say anything in response?*

## Activity 4: Calming strategies: Breathing exercises

Duration:  
5–10 mins

**Aim:** To provide first responders with some simple calming strategies for young children.

**Resources:** Nil

**Instructions:** Participants quickly practise slow breathing.

1. *Hissing breath:* Breathe in through the nose, long deep inhale, and out the mouth on a hissing sound, slow and long (just like a snake!)
2. *Breathing around a square:* Give children something to hold or look at (e.g. a nearby window) that is square in shape. Ask them to breathe in through their nose and out through their mouth.
  - Start by drawing the child's attention to the bottom right hand side of the square.
  - Ask them to breathe in through their nose with you as their eyes travel up the right edge of the square to a slow four count ('1 and 2 and 3 and 4') and then breathe out slowly through their mouth across the top edge for another count of four.
  - Breathe in slowly as the eyes travel down the edge (count to four) and out as the eyes go across (count to four).
  - Repeat this 2–3 times.
  - Give encouragement and praise as the child responds to the cues and slows their breathing.
3. Ask if anyone else has any quick breathing or calming exercises they know of that could be used with children and run through them.

## Activity 5: Brainstorming: How do you normally take care of yourself?

Duration:  
5–10 mins

**Aim:** To engage first responders with ideas of self-care by asking them to quickly reflect on ways they take care of themselves in their everyday lives.

**Resources:** Whiteboard

**Instructions:** Ask participants to nominate ways they take care of themselves. Use prompts to get started, as necessary (e.g. 'go for a run', 'read a book', 'do yoga', etc.).

Jot down responses on whiteboard.

## Activity 6: Create a self-care plan

Duration:  
10–15 mins

**Aim:** To encourage first responder's self-care by preparing for difficult situations.

**Resources:** Completed self-care plan/Blank self-care plan

**Instructions:** Discuss completed self-care plan with participants. Ask participants to complete their own.

## Activity 7: Case study

Duration:  
10–15 mins

**Resources:** Presentation slide – Case study

**Instructions:** Ask the participants to read the case study. Ask for any thoughts or comments:

- *Discuss this case with your colleagues*
- *Has anyone has ever felt this way?*
- *Does anyone have any ideas about how to manage these feelings?*

## Activity 8: Introduction of resource matrix

Duration:  
5 mins

**Aim:** Increase knowledge of available resources.

**Resources:** Resource matrix

**Instructions:** The resource matrix can be introduced at any time during the training. A copy should be given to all participants.