

Activities

Health and Social Service Practitioners (HSSPs)

Emerging
Minds.

Instructions

All activities provided are optional resources. Facilitators should review activities and include/omit as they consider relevant to their audience and time constraints.

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

It is recommended that a minimum of one activity is included per presentation session.

Activity 1: Reflection and discussion: Child trauma responses (0–4 years) and/or (5–12 years)

Duration:
5–10 mins

Aim: To encourage participant engagement and sharing of experience. The activity can be run across age groups (0–12 years) or split into age-specific groups (0–24 months, 2–4 years, 5–12 years) if preferred. Suggested here is 0–4 years (0–24 months and 2–4 years) and 5–12 years age groups.

Resources: Nil

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 2: Practise slow breathing

Duration:
5–10 mins

Aim: To encourage participants to share and explore slow breathing/relaxation strategies they could use/have employed with 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 3: Helpful thoughts

Duration:
5–10 mins

Aim: To encourage participants to think about helpful and unhelpful (frightening) thoughts that children might have during/following a disaster. (Can also be done in pairs or two groups)

Resources: Whiteboard

Instructions: Ask the group to nominate some scary thoughts that children in the age group they work with might have about a disaster (e.g. 'I don't know what to do'; 'My heart is beating so fast I think it will burst').

As each 'scary thought' is generated, ask the group to generate a 'helpful' thought that could replace the scary thought (e.g. 'We've practised what to do in class, I'll just follow the plan and that should really help'; 'I know how to keep calm'). Write these on the whiteboard.

Note: If working with HSSPs interacting with younger children/preschoolers consider altering this activity to generate simple self-statements to assist young children (e.g. 'I am calm'; 'I am safe'; 'I can do it'; 'I am brave'; 'All is well').

Activity 4: Reflection and discussion: Natural disaster events

Duration:
10–15 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: Lead a discussion around the questions:

- What are the MOST LIKELY natural disasters to occur in your area?
- 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 5: Reflection and discussion – Cultural differences

Duration:
10–15 mins

Aim: To encourage participants to think about how cultural differences may impact upon the responses that they see in children post-disaster.

Resources: Whiteboard

Instructions: Lead a discussion around the question:

Thinking about the children you currently work with can you identify any cultural differences that might impact upon their emotional and behavioural responses following a natural disaster?

Note responses on whiteboard.

Activity 6: Create a self-care plan

Duration:
10–15 mins

Aim: To provide participants with a simple ‘wellbeing’ resource for use with parents and children following a natural disaster that will assist them to prepare 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: Create a pleasant events schedule

Duration:
10–15 mins

Aim: To provide participants with a simple ‘wellbeing’ resource for use with parents and children following a natural disaster.

Resources: Completed pleasant events schedule/Blank pleasant events schedule

Instructions: Hand out and discuss completed pleasant events planner with participants. Ask participants to complete their own.