

Psychological First Aid for children



Ensure safety

Keep calm

Connect with others

Encourage self-efficacy

Have hope



Remove the child from, or reduce exposure to the threat of harm.

Provide a calm environment, away from stressful situations or exposure to sights, sounds and smells of the trauma event.

Keep families together and keep children with their parents or other close relatives whenever possible.

Help families to identify their own strengths and abilities to cope.

Reassure the child that their feelings are normal, but assure them that things will be ok.

What is Psychological First Aid for children?

Psychological First Aid for children is an internationally accepted strategy that can be used anytime, but is most widely used in the first hours, days and weeks following a traumatic event. ***Here are some practical ways that Psychological First Aid for children can be applied:***



Ensure safety: Don't leave children unattended. Where possible, protect them from witnessing further traumatic sights and sounds. Protect them from media or other people who want to talk to them and are not their family or part of the emergency response.



Keep calm: Speak in a low, calm voice. Tell children they are safe (when this is the case). Answer questions honestly, but without any frightening or graphic details. Reassure them that they have you and other adults looking out for them and that they will be with their families soon.



Connect with others: Reunite children with their families and loved ones as soon as possible following a disaster or traumatic event. If this is not possible, try to keep in touch by phone or online (e.g. private messaging).



Encourage self-efficacy: Where possible, encourage children to meet their own needs, for example, if they are agitated consider redirecting them to a calming strategy: *'Hey I'm feeling a bit anxious, what do you think could help calm me down? Slow breath -what a great idea! Let's try it together'*



Have hope: Be mindful of children's needs and reactions and be responsive to them. Be gentle and accept all responses. Don't tell them to 'be good', 'be brave' or 'stop being silly'. Some children may require physical touch for reassurance such as hugs, holding hands, or leaning on you.

Delivery partners:



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Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

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