

Webinar 41

A whole child approach to disaster recovery

7:15 pm to 8:30 pm AEDT

Wednesday 4th December 2024

**Emerging
Minds.**

**National Workforce
Centre for Child
Mental Health**

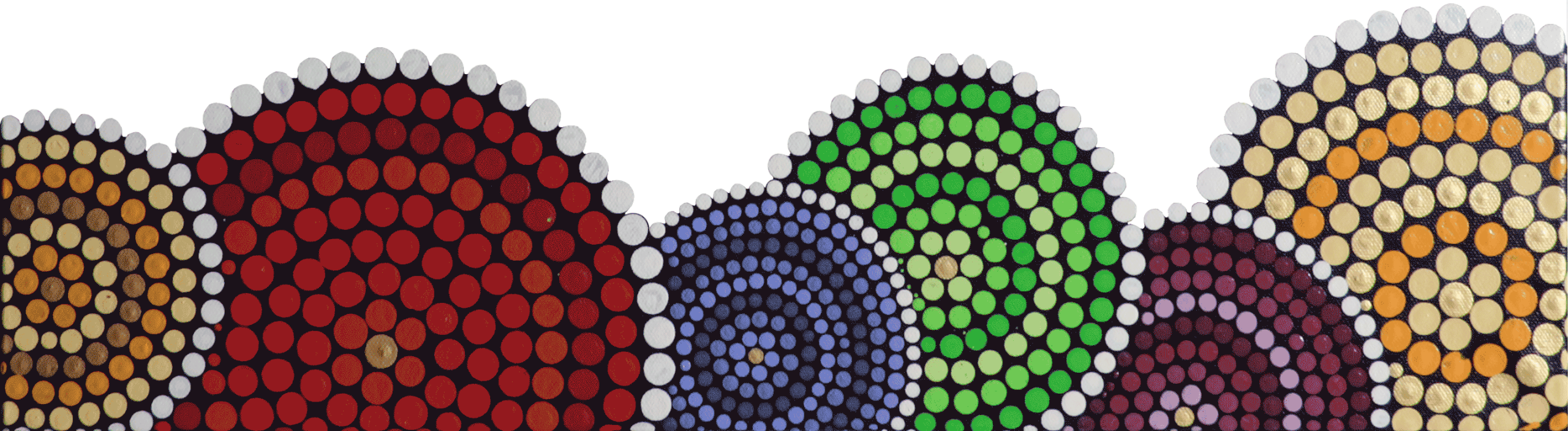


Acknowledgement

National Workforce Centre
for Child Mental Health

I would like to acknowledge the Traditional owners of country throughout Australia and recognise the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities.

I wish to pay respect to Elders past and present, and acknowledge the memories, traditions, cultures and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Tonight's panel



Sarnia Ralston
Child and Family Partner,
QLD



Christopher Gostelow
Psychologist,
WA



Tayla Iellamo
Occupational Therapist
NSW



Facilitator:
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Practice Development
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Welcome to Season Seven



This is the third webinar in the seventh series on infant and child mental health, presented by Emerging Minds and the Mental Health Professionals' Network.

Series Seven topics include:

- Trauma
- Children in Out of Home Care
- Disasters
- Suicidal Ideation
- School Refusal
- Play with infants and toddlers

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Learning outcomes



At the webinar's completion, participants will be able to:

- Outline the benefits of considering and connecting with a child's family, school/early learning service and community as part of disaster recovery approaches.
- Identify how disasters can impact the various aspects of a child's ecology, and how this may increase the child's risk of experiencing mental health difficulties in the immediate aftermath or longer term.
- Describe strategies that support children's relationships, regulation, communication, meaning-making, self-expression, routines and support networks in different environments and contexts following a disaster.
- Discuss ways to involve children and the important adults in their life – their parents, extended family and kin, educators and community leaders – in recovery interventions.

Disclaimer

The content in this webinar is for educational purposes only and does not constitute medical advice.

If any content in tonight's webinar causes distress, please seek care with your GP, local mental health service or Lifeline 13 11 14.

A lived experience perspective

Recovery is a shared effort

- Strong connections across a child's ecosystem create safety and stability
- Consider the child's experience
- Promote and normalise help seeking and help accepting



A lived experience perspective

Ecology

Disasters disrupt home, school, relationships, and mental well-being

Behaviour, mental health and wellbeing experiences - short and long term - could be linked to their disaster experience.

Knowing potential indicators to look out for and normalising it's ok to not be ok; and that sometimes that can be a long time after the exposure.



A lived experience perspective

Support Post Disaster

Build strong connections with trusted adults.

- Educate All: Regulation tools and mindfulness exercises.
- Rebuild Routines: Provide predictability through daily schedules.

Child safe practices need to be considered in preparedness through to post disaster



A lived experience perspective

Recovery – Child participation is essential

Child focused lens

Collaboration enhances recovery

Create formal and informal opportunities for adults around the children to connect



A psychologist perspective

Entry and negotiation

Who is your client?

What is your mandate?

Prepare yourself (inc. the three V's)

Be prepared to form “Swift relationships”

Supporting rather than “expert”

Acknowledge and affirm

Needs identification

A psychologist perspective

Disasters – A systems and ecological view

Individuals and families are part of multiple interconnected systems

Systems:

- Relationship based
- Have strengths, history and challenges
- Evolve and change no matter what

Disasters can:

- Disrupt
- Disturb and test
- Differentially impact individuals and groups
- Create opportunities
- Allow adaptation and flexibilities

A psychologist perspective

Child mental health and wellbeing is optimised through a systems and ecological approach

Safe environments, familiar people and places

A return to familiar routines

System links (e.g. family, school, other agencies and the local community)

Cohesion in purpose, language, communication and messaging

Leaders and adults model for children

Children's reactions and coping are significantly affected by adult behaviour

A psychologist perspective

Interventions and monitoring occur within an ecology

Intervention considerations:

- Evidence-based or evidence-informed
- Can be child initiated or adult initiated
- Voice of the child
- Ensure opportunities for safe expression and processing
- Differentiate child needs vs. adult needs
- ST, MT and LT strategies will be required

Planned and layered; based on history, review and evolving needs

System, group and individual interventions

Coaching, guidance and psychoeducation for adults (and children)

A “Whole school” approach to response, recovery and wellbeing

The importance of symbolism

A psychologist perspective

Involving children in recovery

Recovery – safety, healing, hope, agency and connection

Opportunities for involving children abound:

- Two-way information flow (listen and share)
- Structured and incidental interactions
- Planning (home, school, community)
- Help children to look for symbols of recovery (nature, home, community...)
- Children and schools from elsewhere can positively and symbolically support impacted children, adults, schools and the community

An occupational therapist's perspective

Five essential elements to support recovery following community trauma



Promote sense of safety



Promote calming – predictability & sense of control



Promote sense of self & collective efficacy



Promote connectedness – sense of belonging

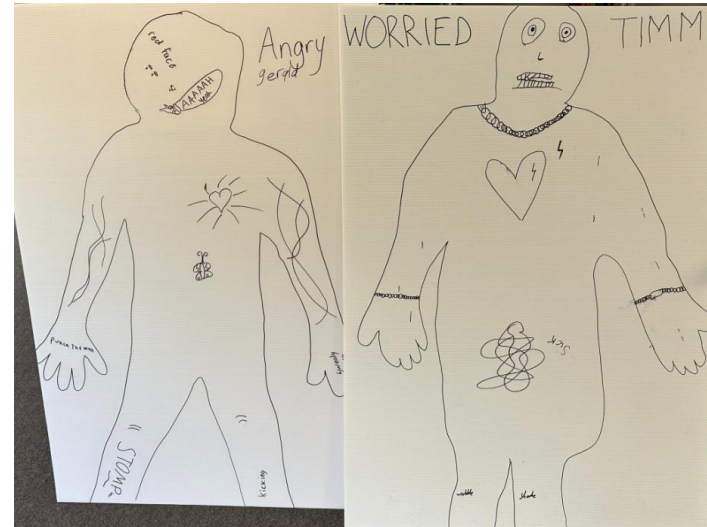


Promote hope

An occupational therapist's perspective

Child strategies

- Body based strategies
- Focus on breath
- Sensory supports
- Build emotional literacy
- Awareness of body signals
- Build connections with peers and safe adults
- Meaning making



An occupational therapist's perspective

Differences in perceived priority of threat for disasters: Adults Vs Children

Adults
1. Threat to own or child's life
2. Injury
3. Loss of property
4. Loss of business and livelihood
5. Loss of pet
6. Loss of community

Children
1. Separation from parents
2. Injury to self
3. Injury or loss of parent
4. Loss of pet
5. Loss of favourite things
6. Disruptions to routines

Family supports

- Highlight family strengths and past successes to foster hope
- Re-establish routines & family roles
- Provide psychoeducation and reframing of behaviours
- Build time for connection activities as a family
- Support to access additional resources and financial assistance.
 - [GIVIT](#) is a very helpful resource!
- Re-connect with community connections



An occupational therapist's perspective

School supports

- Increase classroom wellbeing supports
- Focus on routines & creating predictability
- Increase opportunities for play and movement
- Give Aiesha a purpose and role in the classroom
- Read Birdies Tree storybooks and use craft/ narratives to explore experiences
- Intervene when talk about disasters becomes distressing to students
- Support to access school wide wellbeing services



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