

Friends Supporting Friends:

Friends helping friends during disasters

During disasters like floods, fires and cyclones, lots of kids are great in supporting each other. Some friends stay in constant contact with each other from the first time they hear that the disaster is coming. Often when kids go through really scary experiences, it is their friends that are there to support them.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

You are always going to be there for your friends and supporting each other is one of the really important things that can get you through the tough situations and times that come from a disaster. Here are some important things to keep in mind that can help in this situation:

- Look after yourself
- Sometimes hearing of other people's terrible experiences can make us feel sad and upset. Share the load and speak with someone else, speak with a trusted adult for your own support.
- Don't keep on watching the television coverage over and over again. It becomes overwhelming.
- Make sure you do some fun and nice things too.
- Listen carefully and respectfully to your friends. If it becomes too much (and it can, no matter how caring you are) take a break.
- If you are worried about your friend, tell a teacher or school counsellor or another adult you trust.

After a disaster, some kids will go back to school to get away from the intensity of the situation at home. Some will be back but wish they were still at home so that they know what is happening. Some kids will have parents fighting fires (if there has been a bushfire) or assisting in cleaning up (after cyclones and floods) and will be worried for their safety. Some kids might seem completely untouched by the whole thing

Over the days and weeks after a disaster, friends may be teary, tired, sad, angry, worried or acting as though nothing has happened – all these are 'normal reactions'. Some people may be all of these things at different times

For those kids who have seen and experienced terrifying things and know people who have died, it will take some time to be able to put these things out of their mind. Be supportive, caring and helpful and if they want to talk, listen if you can.

- Remember, it's okay to say "that's so sad, you should tell ... (a trusted adult)"
- You may notice that your friends are having trouble concentrating, are forgetful and need help in class - that's pretty normal too, ask what you can do to help.

There are some great online resources where you can get more information and support from. These are listed below.

Remember to reach out to a teacher, school counsellor or other adult that you trust if you need to talk, or are worried about how your friends are going.

For more information and help:

Kids Helpline:
1800 55 1800
<http://www.kidshelp.com.au>

Lifeline:
13 11 14
<http://www.lifeline.org.au>

Youth Beyond Blue
<http://www.youthbeyondblue.com>

Trauma & Grief Network
www.tgn.anu.edu.au

