

Mitigating Trauma for Children in Disasters



Children have unique coping needs in disasters.

The CLDR Trauma Mitigation Model was developed utilizing current evidence and expert first-hand experience to attend to the specific needs of children in disasters and crises. The following summarizes the practical application of this model.

TRAUMA MITIGATION MODEL

CO-REGULATION

Recognize your own emotional state.

Intentionally use your body language, tone, and other nonverbal communication to regulate yourself while engaging the child.

Remain intentionally aware that the child may begin to copy or join you as you regulate yourself.

ACTION

- Identify how you are feeling and what actions you can take to regulate yourself
- Begin to regulate yourself while saying out loud what you are doing in simple terms, "deep breath"

CONNECTION

Be mentally and emotionally present for the child, in the current moment with your whole being, your whole attention, and whole awareness.

Connection with a safe, stable adult is a strong predictor of a child's ability to be resilient in a challenge.

ACTION

- Get on the child's level
- Communicate through your body language and facial expressions that you are attentive, you understand, and you are here with them in this challenge

COGNITION

Once the brain is in a regulated state and connection has been established, a child can more effectively enter into cognitive engagement.

Be intentional with your words. Use simple instructions that are honest yet supportive and use words that are understandable for the child.

ACTION

- Use honest words that build connection and emotional safety and decrease confusion

Examples: "I don't know the answer to that right now, but I will do my best to find out and tell you."
"We are safe right now. If that changes, I will tell you, and you and I will move together"

CONTROL

Find ways to allow the child to have control.

This can be accomplished by creating predictability or routine and encouraging opportunities to engage in play.

ACTION

- Let the child know what they can expect
- Allow the child choices when possible
- Provide play opportunities, following the child's lead in the play

