

COGNITION

A child/teen is often able to engage more effectively in verbal interactions once their brain has moved out of a state of dysregulation.

Clear and simple explanations are important to help them understand what is going on and what is needed from them. Providing opportunities for them to share what they need and feel is also essential.



Infants and Toddlers: 0-2 years

- **Simple Statements of Safety:** Repeating statements of love and safety to infants and toddlers can help us effectively attend to them while weaving in simple wording as they continue to develop cognitive and verbal skills.



Early Childhood: 3-6 years

- **Provide Clear and Simple Explanations:** Repeating statements of love and safety and providing simple explanations can help children understand what is going on and what is needed from them. Children at this age may need explanations or instructions repeated and broken down into simple steps.
- **Limiting Media Exposure:** Young children struggle to differentiate what is currently happening and what is a repeated image on TV. Today's news commentators also tend to use strong language and loud tones. These can feel overwhelming and frightening to children. Turning the television off promotes a safe space, quiet time to think, and an opportunity to connect together.



Middle Childhood: 7-12 years

- **Provide Facts:** Discuss with your children what they are hearing and seeing on news or social media sources. Children of this age group need their parents to help them understand and interpret what they are hearing and seeing. Providing explanations that help them understand the events, changes, and new routines will increase a sense of control by providing an accurate understanding of the information.
- **Prepare children for changes:** Talk about changes that are happening or may happen. Be honest about what you know or don't know. Example: "We are safe here right now, if that changes we will move together."



Adolescence: 13+ years

- **Reframing:** The way we talk about disasters can have an impact on how teens feel and experience safety. You might change words from "stuck at home" to "safe at home" during quarantine and reframe evacuating during a natural disaster to moving to a safe space. Less threatening or scary images, yet still accurate, promotes a sense of safety and protection.
- **Differentiate between Known and Unknown:** Helping your teen to make distinctions about what is known and what is unknown helps them to foster a sense of control. Most teens' greatest source of information comes from other teens. Each time the information is told it has the possibility of being distorted, altered or changed in some way. Provide your teen with accurate sources of information such as school or community home pages, newsletters, and updates. Initiate discussion with them to clarify information.
- **Provide Reassurance:** Teens may feel uncertain regarding their futures. Reassure your child that whatever they are feeling is normal and okay. Let them know that even when you do not have answers for them, you recognize their concern, frustration, and sadness.
- **Take Action:** Teens are seeking ways to impact their world and the future. By identifying opportunities that support meaning making teens can increase hopefulness through volunteer work after the disaster or writing letters to leaders in government or agencies about their experiences.