

# Helping Children Rebound



**Strategies for Preschool Teachers**

**By Cate Heroman and Jenna Bilmes**



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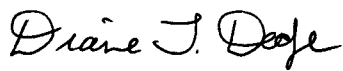
## Foreword

When we first learned of the devastation that hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, and Texas, we felt a special concern for our staff members and staff development specialists who live in southern Louisiana, as well as for the children and for the many teachers and administrators we have worked with over the years in the Gulf Coast region. After our initial relief efforts, we took some time to step back and consider our broader responsibility to the field. We felt compelled to offer additional support to our colleagues in the affected states and to those throughout the country who are welcoming displaced children and families who have lost everything.

The result is this booklet, which presents teaching strategies that address the specific needs of children who have experienced the recent hurricanes. Reflecting on the organizational structure of *The Creative Curriculum® for Preschool*, we realized that each of the Curriculum's components—the research and theory about how children develop and learn, characteristics of development, a positive learning environment, what children learn, the teacher's role, and the family's role—helps teachers purposefully observe what children do and say, reflect on their observations, and respond in supportive ways. We also think that the interest areas—blocks, dramatic play, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, cooking, computers, and the outdoor areas—offer opportunities for teachers to help children cope with the disruption in their lives and respond when children reenact their experiences. We created this guide to help teachers use *The Creative Curriculum* approach to help children begin to rebound.

I am indebted to Cate Heroman, Director of Preschool/Kindergarten Initiatives at Teaching Strategies, who first thought to write this booklet. While she has used the framework of *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* as a way of organizing the information, we believe that this booklet is a resource for any preschool program that is looking for ways to support children who have been affected by the devastation of these hurricanes. The booklet could not have been written without the expertise of Jenna Bilmes, who is a mental health specialist with Faces of Crisis Nursery in Phoenix, Arizona and a consultant for the U.S. Department of Defense Dependent Schools and for Sonoma State University.

We hope that this booklet, and a forthcoming one for programs serving infants and toddlers, will help teachers address the needs of children in crisis.



Diane Trister Dodge, President  
Teaching Strategies, LLC





## *Introduction*

Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma have devastated hundreds of thousands of people in the southern United States. The stress and trauma have mounted over days, weeks, and months. Entire communities have been uprooted, and family members have been separated from one another or placed in cultures and environments that are unfamiliar to them. Families and communities, the two most stabilizing factors in a child's life, have been disrupted.

Preschool-age children have been affected by the hurricane in different ways. Many preschoolers evacuated and moved in with family or friends. Some stayed and witnessed the storm firsthand. Others experienced flooding and wading through water to higher ground. Many suffered the chaos of the Superdome or life in other shelters. They may have gone without food and water for a long time. They may have witnessed death and dying. They may have been rescued by boat, bus, or helicopter. These experiences put preschoolers at risk, but children with the same experiences often respond in different ways.

As a preschool teacher, you may have a single child in your care who has been displaced, or your school or classroom may have been damaged or completely destroyed by wind and water. Your own life might be very difficult.

There are four psychological tasks that children face after a disaster such as a hurricane (Vernberg & Vogel, 1993). These are

1. accepting the events that have occurred
2. identifying, labeling, and expressing emotions
3. regaining a sense of mastery and control
4. resuming age-appropriate roles and activities

This guide is designed to assist you as you help children accomplish these tasks in your preschool classroom. We hope that it gives you practical strategies for supporting children through a very traumatic time in their lives.

## *How do child development theory and research help us understand and respond to children?*

The **theory and research** behind *The Creative Curriculum for Preschool* influence the way we understand children and our recommendations for responding to children in a time of crisis. The works of theorists such as Piaget, Erikson, Maslow, Vygotsky, Smilansky, and Gardner, as well as more recent research in brain development and resiliency, guide the way we respond to children. Consider these findings as you reflect on what children and families are experiencing in the aftermath of a devastating hurricane:

- Children’s basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, belonging, and security must be met.
- Children’s thinking changes as they mature, so the perceptions of younger preschoolers may be different from those of older preschoolers. For example, one child may believe that a person who has died will wake up or come back, while another child is just beginning to understand that death is permanent.
- Preschoolers are likely to focus on the concrete details of the hurricane or the events associated with it.
- Preschoolers tend to focus on one thing at a time. Because they are egocentric, they will connect what they witness to themselves and what is important to them. For example, a child may think she caused the storm because of something she did.
- Preschoolers often talk aloud to themselves as they play. This enables you to learn about their thinking processes. As they talk aloud, they express their thoughts.
- Preschoolers often generalize from the facts they have available to them. They might think, “Wind and rain blew my house away. If the wind blows or it rains again, my new house will be gone.”
- Because preschoolers’ logical thinking is developing, it is difficult for them to figure out what happened and why.
- Preschoolers may not always distinguish between what is real and what is pretend.
- Young children may make false assumptions or draw the wrong conclusions about the causes of major events. They may think, “The hurricane came because I was being bad.”
- Stress can make learning more difficult.
- Preschoolers often reenact something they have experienced or watched.
- The negative effects of hardship can be alleviated and children can develop the strength and skills necessary to deal with adversity. Children can develop resiliency when they have safe, supportive environments; have access to caring, supportive adults; have opportunities to develop self-control; and are taught with strategies that help them become successful learners.

## *How do preschool children behave after a traumatic event?*

Thinking about how children typically **develop and learn** can be helpful in planning responses to their trauma. Preschoolers have a hard time adjusting to change and loss. They cannot grasp the concept of permanent loss and often see consequences as reversible. When preschoolers experience a hurricane firsthand, they may feel helpless and powerless. Because they lack the ability to protect themselves or others, they feel intense fear and insecurity. Preschool children are beginning to develop coping skills, but they often do not have the language to express their feelings.

Children react to stress in different ways and recover at different rates. The degree to which they are affected depends on factors such as these:

- how close they were to the disaster (e.g., whether they were rescued by boat or saw news coverage of rescues)
- how quickly their basic physical needs were met
- their family situation before the event (e.g., divorce, new baby, moving to a new school)
- how their family members react to the disaster
- their disposition and resiliency

In the weeks following a traumatic event, preschoolers' play may reflect aspects of the event. They may reenact a particular incident repeatedly. Over time, you should see the play progress from reenacting destruction to becoming hopeful and moving on. For example, you may initially see play focused on knocking down block buildings or burying toys and dolls among other materials. As children work through their feelings over time, their play might progress to pretending to be construction workers who are rebuilding houses (Saylor et al., 1992). Whether this play progression occurs will give you some insight into how well children are adjusting.



You may see challenging behavior that is a direct response to the trauma and stress caused by the hurricanes, rather than behavior typical for that child. You may observe

<i>aggression, fighting</i>	<i>guardedness about changes in environment</i>
<i>anti-social behavior</i>	<i>hyperactivity or decrease in activity</i>
<i>asking many questions about the event</i>	<i>inability to concentrate</i>
<i>avoiding things that remind them of storms</i>	<i>increased concern for safety of loved ones</i>
<i>bed-wetting</i>	<i>increased fear of animals, monsters, darkness</i>
<i>changes in eating and sleeping patterns</i>	<i>nightmares</i>
<i>clinging</i>	<i>not interested/not participating in play</i>
<i>constant desire to talk about event</i>	<i>not showing emotion</i>
<i>crying</i>	<i>regression</i>
<i>daydreaming</i>	<i>separation fears</i>
<i>demanding behavior</i>	<i>speech difficulties</i>
<i>disobedience</i>	<i>startling easily</i>
<i>distractibility</i>	<i>tantrums</i>
<i>distrust of adults' ability to protect them</i>	<i>thumb-sucking</i>
<i>extreme attachment to a place where they feel safe</i>	<i>unexplained aches and pains, upset stomach</i>
<i>fear of changes in weather</i>	<i>withdrawal from others</i>

Children's emotional responses to traumatic events may emerge at different rates. For example, some children may not show signs of distress until they return to their homes, schools, and neighborhoods. Other children may be distraught immediately after the event but are able to work through their feelings and cope in their new setting.

Symptoms of children's stress may be intermittent. If you record your observations, you can look for patterns. With the passage of time, most children will be able to cope with their hurricane experience. If a child's symptoms (that were not present before the hurricane) interfere with aspects of daily functioning and persist for at least one month, it is important to refer the child for evaluation for possible post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (ZERO TO THREE, 2005). This disorder occurs in a minority of children, but an estimated 39% of children exposed to trauma will meet the criteria for PTSD (Fletcher, 2002). In a study of 175 Head Start children following Hurricane Andrew in 1992, 16.5% were reported as showing symptoms of PTSD 12 months after the storm, and 11.6% had symptoms 18 months after the hurricane. PTSD places young children at increased risk for failure to develop normal cognitive, social, and emotional skills (Delameter & Applegate, 1999). **Of course, always ask for advice if children pose a physical threat to themselves or others in a way that you cannot manage, or if they show other symptoms of being overwhelmed by distress.**

## *How can the learning environment play a role in children's recovery from a traumatic event?*

The **learning environment**—the physical environment, the daily schedule and routines, and the social and emotional atmosphere—plays an important role in helping children feel safe and comfortable and feel that they belong. The following strategies will help you create an environment that supports children as they recover from the traumatic experience.

### **The Physical Environment**

The materials you place in the classroom and the experiences you offer can help children **calm themselves** (e.g., water and water props, finger paint, shaving cream, books, soft music, sensory tubs, puzzles, and pegboards); **express feelings and emotions** (e.g., books, writing and drawing supplies, dramatic play props, storytelling props, clay, paint); and **cope with frustration** (e.g., blocks, materials for movement activities, equipment for outdoor play, clay for pounding).

If your classroom was damaged or destroyed in the storm, you may be receiving donated materials. Take the time to introduce the materials to the children gradually. Enlist the children's help in unpacking the boxes. Brainstorm ways that the materials can be used, how to take care of them, and where to store them. Invite children to assist you in labeling the materials and shelves.

To help children feel part of the classroom community, make sure each child has a cubby labeled with his name and photograph. Remember to include each child in attendance charts, job charts, and sign-in folders. This is particularly important for children who have been displaced and are entering a new class.

Create cozy areas where children can go to when they feel stress, anger, or fear. Make the area warm, inviting, and homelike and furnish it with soft items such as beanbag chairs, pillows, soft blankets, and stuffed animals.

Take pictures of children with their families, if possible, and display them to help with separation. Allow children to keep pictures in their cubbies or their pockets. Remember that many of their photos may have been destroyed or lost in the hurricane.

### **Structure**

Children's worlds have been shattered. We know from research that reestablishing regular routines may be more important than any other intervention (Blaufarb & Levine, 1972; Gordon & Wraith, 1993; Prinstein, LaGreca, Vernberg, & Silverman, 1996; Terr, 1994; Vogel & Vernberg, 1993). Comfort children and help them feel safe and secure by having a consistent, predictable daily schedule. Establish routines that follow the same pattern each day, e.g., sign in upon arrival, set the table for snacks or meals, choose an interest area in which to work. If a routine changes, talk about the change ahead of time, explain why it is different from what you usually do each day, and tell the children what to expect. Be flexible enough, however, to stop or adapt an activity if you see that it upsets a child or children.

Consider how you can use each daily routine to support children through this difficult time:

### Arrival

You may have children who have difficulty separating from family members. Greet the child and family member warmly. Tell them how glad you are that they came to school today. Have familiar materials (e.g., playdough, beads and string, puzzles) available that children can use easily. Invite family members to stay until their child has transitioned successfully. Ask family members to inform their children when they are about to leave and not to sneak out. Suggest that they say where they are going, what they will be doing, and when they will return, e.g., *While you are playing here, I'm going to be washing clothes and making some phone calls. I'll come back to get you in the afternoon when rest time is over.* Encourage parents to let their children know that they will be safe and their teacher will take care of them.

Make a class big book titled *While I'm at School* and have children draw a picture and/or dictate a short paragraph about where their parents and other family members are and what they are doing. When children seem lonely and miss their loved ones, read the book together.

### Group Times

Large-group time (sometimes referred to as “circle time”) is a period for children to experience a sense of belonging. During this time they can express their ideas and feelings. Small-group time provides opportunities to offer activities with fewer children and through which you can meet a variety of needs. As you establish regular routines and daily activities, respond to children's questions and comments, and follow their leads as they react to the hurricane. Listen and empathize.

Use group times as an opportunity to teach children coping and problem-solving strategies. You might begin a group time discussion with this sentence frame: *I was afraid when \_\_\_\_\_; I felt better when \_\_\_\_\_.* For example, *You know, I was once really, really afraid when I went outside in the dark and couldn't see. I felt much better when I turned on the flashlight and could see.* Some children may need to tell their stories to the group and get group support and feedback.

Group discussions may support an understanding of cause and effect. This will help children begin to think more logically about the storm. For example, you might discuss what might happen in different situations: *What might happen if you didn't wear your shoes to school? ...forgot to turn the water off in the bathtub? ...were lost in a store?*

Another topic for group discussions should be about how to make new friends. If you have an established classroom and a new child enters your program, talk with the other children about what they can do to make the new child feel welcome.

Be aware that some children will turn every conversation back to the traumatic event. For instance, when you talk about the upcoming visit to a grocery store, they talk about the hurricane. When you talk about the recipe you're going to cook today, they talk about the hurricane. This indicates that they need some time and space set aside to talk about their storm experiences.

## Choice Time

Choice time is usually the highlight of any preschooler's day. Young children who have experienced the trauma of a hurricane may feel a loss of power and control. When children are able to make choices, they gain control in a constructive way. Children may choose their interest area, the materials they use, and their playmates. Help children make those choices if they are having difficulty coping with the decision-making process. Some children may want to stay by your side and not venture off on their own. Use choice time as an opportunity to help children express their emotions through their play. Later in this booklet, we'll suggest ways to respond to children as they work and play during choice time.



## Transitions

Transitions can be challenging times of the day, even when no traumatic event has occurred. In fact, children who seem to be well-adjusted during other parts of the day may fall apart during a transition. Consider all the transitions and interruptions to their daily routines that children experienced as a result of the hurricanes. Prepare children before moving from one activity to another. Tell them what to expect and what they will be doing. Some may even want to hold your hand. Use songs and chants to capture children's attention and ease the transition.

Children who waited in long lines to board buses during evacuation or to receive assistance may have difficulty waiting or walking in line. They may rush or push to be at the front of the line or feel a little anxious while waiting their turn. Minimize waiting time in the classroom and individualize transitions as much as possible. For example, rather than having everyone stand in a bathroom line at one time, allow children to use the bathroom when they need to and offer reminders. Rather than waiting for all children to finish cleaning up interest areas before joining the whole group, provide books for children to read and begin your activities with a smaller group. The others will hear and join you as they finish.

## Rest Time

If your program has a nap or rest time, be aware that the child who has experienced trauma may be fearful of the dark or may be unable to rest quietly. Help children relax with soft music or guide them to imagine pleasant thoughts such as listening to the birds chirp as they flutter their wings or walking through a park. Consider the needs of individual children by planning quiet activities for non-nappers or giving them a nap time bag filled with materials they can use quietly, such as magic slates, books, or a small mechanical sketch pad. Reassure children that adults will stay in the room while they sleep and will care for them.

Our Day	
	Arrival
	Group Meeting
	Choice & Small Groups
	Outdoors
	Story
	Lunch
	Rest
	Outdoors
	Choice Time
	Group Meeting
	Home



## Creating a Classroom Community

Building relationships is a critical factor in children's recovery from the crisis. Children want to feel as though they belong to a community. They find comfort and security in knowing that people care about them.

Children who have been relocated to a new school or community have been separated from their friends. Not only will you need to support them and help them learn to make new friends, you will also need to teach the other children in the class what to do when a new child enters the group. Model caring behaviors and ways to be compassionate, e.g., *We're so happy you are at our school. We hope that you feel better soon.* Take the time to help the child who has relocated learn all of the classroom routines and rituals. Pair new children with buddies who will help them learn the classroom routines.

Use class meetings and large-group times to discuss how to make friends and how to help each other. Experts suggest that it is not beneficial to ask children to relive the entire experience of the hurricane over and over. If children mention it, let them talk and then respond, but help them focus on the positive aspects of their lives and the entire rebuilding effort. Preschoolers are egocentric and often believe that they did something to cause the storm. They need to be assured that storms are not caused by people.

Another way to help preschoolers is to model and encourage actions that help others. Participating in a group project helps all children experience a sense of belonging and contribution. Whether or not your program has been affected or you have displaced children, consider these ideas:

- Write thank-you cards to send to volunteers or rescue workers.
- Create a quilt to hang in a hallway, with each square decorated by a child.
- Write and illustrate books for their Library Area.
- Raise funds by holding a bake sale with treats made in the Cooking Area.

While many worthwhile relief efforts are underway, the *Southern Early Childhood Association (SECA)* ([www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)) has an initiative called *Heart to Heart and Hands to Hands*. They will work with you to adopt an early childhood program that needs assistance or to pair you with assistance if you are rebuilding your own program. A good place to begin thinking about what programs need or posting what you need for your classroom is the U.S. Department of Education's hurricane relief Web site ([www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov](http://www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov)).

Although it may be tempting to relax the class rules and place few limits on children because they have been through a difficult experience, this may hurt more than help. Children need to know that an adult is in charge and will keep them safe. When adults are in charge, it allows children to be children. They will feel more secure if you demonstrate positive guidance than if you do not manage children's challenging behaviors.

Be clear about your expectations for behavior. Teach children how to use positive problem-solving strategies to cope with stress. Focus on trying to understand the causes of children's challenging behaviors and change the stimuli. Tell the child you want to help prevent the inappropriate behavior. Model and teach appropriate behavior.



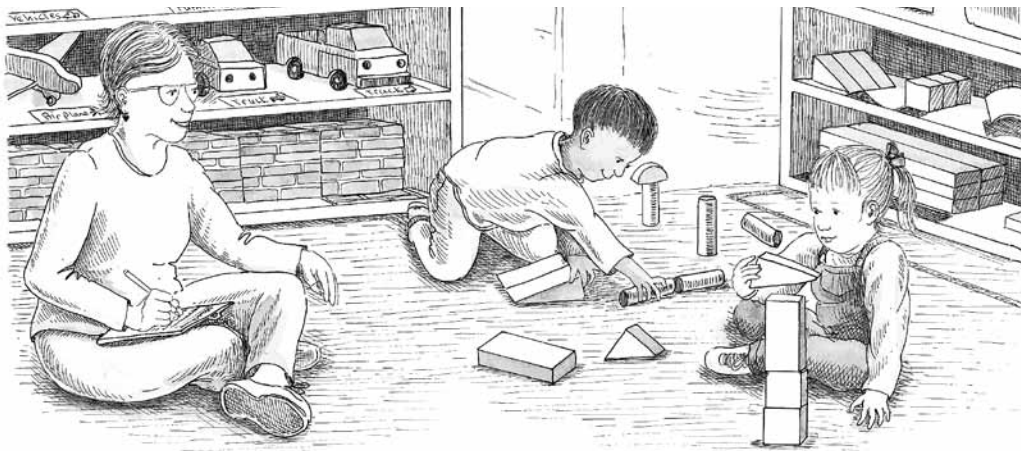
## *How do traumatic events affect children's learning?*

Despite the disaster, you are still responsible for **what children learn**, and you particularly want to make sure that children who were already at risk for school failure do not fall further behind. The landmark book *From Neurons to Neighborhoods* highlights evidence that emotional development and academic learning are far more closely intertwined in the early years than was once understood (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Another report, *A Good Beginning*, found that “children who do not begin kindergarten socially and emotionally competent are often not successful in the early years of school—and can be plagued by behavioral, emotional, academic, and social development problems that follow them into adulthood” (The Child Mental Health Foundations and Agencies Network [FAN], 2000).

The devastating effects of the storms may interrupt the social and emotional development of many of the children who were victims of the storm. Most children will work through the trauma and begin to develop and learn again successfully. Children who experience trauma, especially those who experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may be affected academically. The list of symptoms includes many that might interfere with learning: daydreaming, distractibility, hyperactivity or decrease in activity, regression, tantrums, and so forth. You may see some developmental lags as you assess the learning and development of many of the children.

Getting back to the routine and rhythm of the school day is important for children's recovery. This routine should include learning in content areas: literacy, math, science, social studies, the arts, and technology. First and foremost, however, children's social and emotional development must be nurtured.

Social/emotional development is best enhanced when positive experiences are woven into the daily routine and interest area activities and when they are integrated into content area learning. Examples of this include writing letters to pen-pal classrooms who were affected by the storm (literacy); working together to sort, classify, and count new materials (math); learning with a friend to take care of the class pet (science); discovering the new community (social studies). Children can use the arts to express their deepest thoughts and feelings and will develop social skills as they use technology together to solve problems and communicate with others. Of course, although we typically recommend long-term studies as a way to help children investigate their interests, extreme care must be taken before attempting a study of hurricanes. The focus of such a study should be on what children can see and actively investigate in a positive way, such as construction and rebuilding.



## *How should teachers respond to children in crisis?*

The **teacher's role** is central: Preschoolers who have been through the trauma of a hurricane will rely on you to be their secure base. They may cling to you or stay close as they try to cope with their new situation. Try to get back to normal activities as soon as possible and don't focus on the hurricane to the exclusion of other things.

Preschoolers will probably ask you questions again and again about the hurricane. They may ask, "Why did the hurricane come? When do I get to go back to my house? Why did the water take my toys away? Will my dog be okay?" Don't be afraid to talk about what happened, and be patient with their repetitive questions. Let children take the lead. If a child mentions the subject, listen, talk about it, answer questions, and provide comfort and support. Don't dwell on details or allow the topic to dominate everything you do in the classroom. Find out what children think and feel. Answer questions in language that the child can understand easily. Give honest answers and use accurate vocabulary. For example, children will not understand when you say that someone who has died has "gone away" or "gone to sleep." If you can't answer a question, just say so.



Correct children's misunderstandings with simple, straightforward language. Be ready to discuss difficult questions. Talk to other adults about how you might respond. Keep reminding children that you will do everything possible to keep them safe.

Remain calm and reassuring and emphasize safety. Children sense how you feel. If they sense that you are upset, disorganized, confused, or anxious, they may avoid talking about the trauma, and that will make their recovery more difficult. Share with children ways you handle things that upset you, e.g., listen to soft music; go for a walk; take slow, deep breaths.

Children need physical reassurance that you can provide by sitting close together, offering hugs and smiles, and holding hands. Stress the community's and nation's efforts to clean up and point out all of the good deeds that are being performed.

## *How can you assist families in helping their children recover from the crisis?*

Life for **families** recovering from a hurricane is stressful. In addition to damage to or loss of their homes, jobs, and even loved ones, families must also care for their children. Preschoolers may have trouble getting ready for bed and getting up in the morning. They may be scared to sleep in their own rooms or may be living in a shelter where it is difficult to sleep. They may be afraid of water and scared to take a bath or a shower. Understandably, children who have been close to the disaster may have trouble separating when they arrive at school. Talk with parents about their children's behavior at school and find out about children's behavior away from school so, as a team, you can help the children recover from the traumatic effects of the hurricane.

The extent to which children display symptoms described earlier is related to their parents' response to the disaster (Green et al., 1991; Richman, 1992). If parents have high levels of stress, they may ignore their children's attempts to talk about the hurricane, or children may not express their emotions to avoid upsetting their parents (Pynoos et al., 1995).

When children arrive at school, listen to the family members. Allow them to take their time in separating from their children. Ask the family members to tell their children when they are leaving and to reassure the children that they will return at the end of the day.

Be mindful about asking families to help children with home activities such as cutting pictures from a magazine, bringing in empty food containers for literacy activities, or counting the number of doors or windows in their houses. Consider the living conditions of families when you ask for involvement.

Communicate frequently with family members about how their child is progressing and adapting. Give family members photos taken at school to display at their new residences, because their pictures may have been destroyed.

Meet with families and help them learn to spot trauma-related behavior and how to help their preschoolers talk about and understand their feelings. The National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder gives the following advice to families and encourages them to monitor their child's coping in school and child care by expressing concerns and communicating with the teaching staff.

## Helping Your Child Cope With Traumatic Events

### Listen and Talk

- Listen to and tolerate your child's retelling of the event.
- Accept and help your child to name strong feelings during **brief** conversations (children cannot talk about these feelings or the experience for long).
- Provide opportunities and props for trauma-related play.

### Recognize Fears

- Respect your child's fears; allow time for him/her to cope with fears.
- If your child is fearful, avoid unnecessary separations from important caretakers.
- Protect your child from reexposure to frightening situations and reminders of the trauma, including scary TV programs, movies, stories, and physical or locational reminders of events.
- Provide additional nighttime comforts when possible such as night-lights, stuffed animals, and physical comfort after nightmares.
- Explain to your child that nightmares come from the fears he/she has inside, that they are not real, and that they will soon go away.
- Try to discover what triggers sudden fearfulness or regression.

### Understand Challenging Behavior

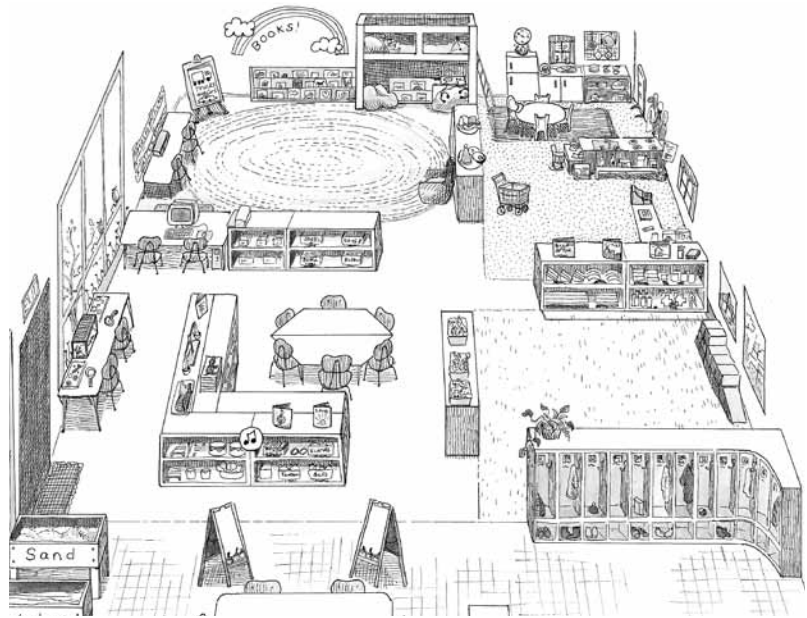
- Expect and understand that your child may regress in some ways. Maintain basic household rules.
- Expect some difficult or uncharacteristic behavior.
- Set firm limits on hurtful or scary play and behavior.

### Maintain Routines

- Maintain household and family routines that comfort your child.
- Avoid introducing experiences that are new and challenging for your child.

## Interest Areas

Through play, young children make sense of the world around them. In a preschool classroom, interest areas provide smaller spaces where children can focus their play, engage in group discussions with one child or a small group, and solve problems together. In this section, we discuss 11 interest areas (dramatic play, blocks, toys and games, art, library, discovery, sand and water, music and movement, computers, cooking, and outdoors) and offer examples of child behaviors that you might observe in these areas following the traumatic events of a hurricane. We offer some points to reflect upon and expand. Considering why children are acting a certain way will guide you in responding appropriately.



### General Guidelines for Responding to Children

When children are reenacting events (usually in dramatic play, with blocks, outdoors, or at the water table) you describe what they are doing, respond to their feelings and actions, and end on a constructive note. When children are drawing or painting, you describe what you see and invite the child to tell you about his work. **Do not talk about the storm directly unless the child does so first.** If the child is not reenacting or otherwise representing hurricane-related experiences, respond as you would typically. If the child refers to the storm, then use storm references in your response. If you have continuing questions about the child's behavior and feelings, please consult an expert about whether there is cause for concern.

Notice whether the play **reenacts destruction** (lost toys, lack of food, relocation, falling buildings) or if it **indicates hope and moving on** (rebuilding, making signs, cleaning up, rescuing). Your response should be appropriate to the type of play you observe. For example, if a child throws everything in the home living area into a pile, you might say, *What a mess! Nothing is right anymore. Let me help you put things right again.* You might see a child acting hopeful, for example, when she lines up the toys neatly on the shelf. Your response might be, *Look, everything is exactly in its place. It feels so good when things are right! I'll come back in a few minutes to see how you are doing.* When children are in despair, end with a hopeful comment. When children move on to healing, reinforce the positive activity.

As you respond to children, use the following ideas to help you decide what to say and do.



## Giving Reflective Feedback When Children Are Reenacting Events

Reenacting Destruction*	Showing Hope and Moving On
<p>Step 1: Give reflective feedback on the action.</p> <p><i>Everybody's trying to sleep in the same bed.</i></p>	<p>Step 1: Give reflective feedback on the action.</p> <p><i>Oh, you're making beds on the floor.</i></p>
<p>Step 2: Describe the underlying feeling.</p> <p><i>There's not enough room, and kids are getting hurt.</i></p>	<p>Step 2: Describe the underlying feeling.</p> <p><i>Now there will be beds for everyone. When so many people stay together in one house, people may have to sleep on the floor.</i></p>
<p>Step 3: Redirect the behavior.</p> <p><i>Let's make some room on the floor so everyone will have room to sleep.</i></p>	
<p>Step 4: Suggest a positive resolution.</p> <p><i>Now we're all comfy.</i></p>	<p>Step 3: Say what you're going to do or offer ways to extend play.</p> <p><i>Let's make everyone comfy. Would you like me to find a blanket and pillow for you?</i></p>

\*Some children might not respond positively to your reflective feedback because they are anxious. They might talk faster and become more difficult to understand when they try to tell you what they are doing or try to direct their peers. They may change the subject or shut down and act as if they cannot hear you. Even when this happens, continue the steps. Always end with a positive suggestion about what the child can do.

## Giving Reflective Feedback When Children Are Drawing and Painting

Step 1: Describe what you see.

*I see that you used all the colors at the easel today.*

Step 2: Give positive reinforcement by doing one of the following:

- **Talk about the action:** *You painted a picture and then covered it with black and red paint.*
- **Ask about the process:** *What happened when one color ran into another?*
- **Ask open-ended questions that encourage children to think and respond:** *Will you tell me about this picture?*
- **Use language that encourages and supports the children's efforts:** *You made lots of paintings today. Would you like to hang one on the wall to share with the other children?*

## Dramatic Play

Dramatic play provides one of the best vehicles for children to feel strong and powerful and to overcome a feeling of helplessness. Through dramatic play, children can work through their fears and anxieties and attempt to make sense of what has happened to the world around them. Allow the children to act out their experiences. Accept their play, but be ready to step in if you think someone will get hurt.

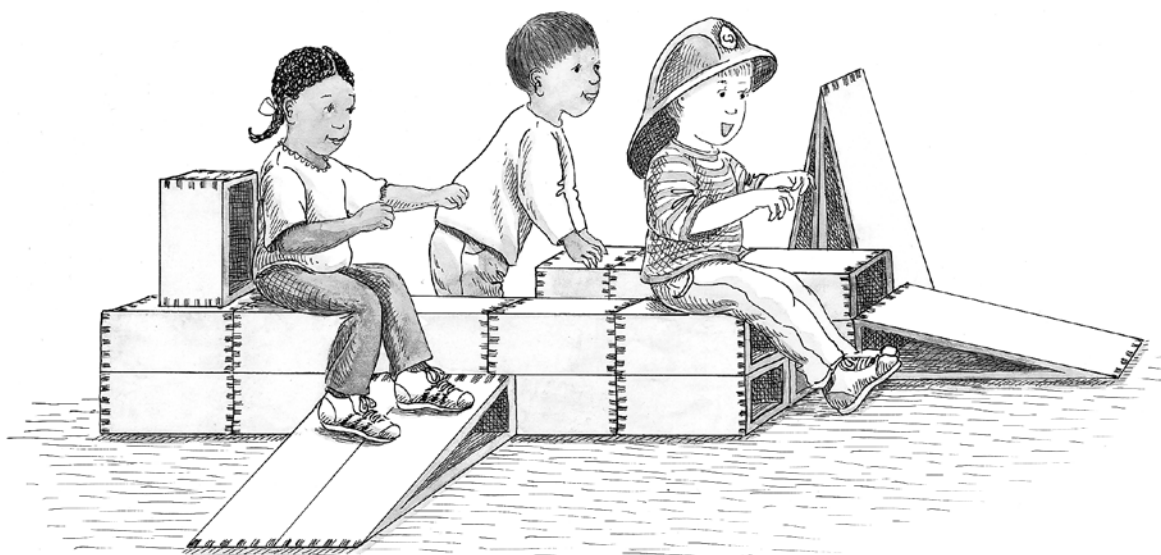
Include props focused on helpers: Red Cross volunteers, firefighters, police, doctors, nurses. Add dolls, blankets, mats, doctor and nurse kits, first aid props, Ziploc® bags (for MREs), small suitcase on wheels, and toy cell phones to your existing Dramatic Play Area.

Observe children's dramatic play over time. In the period immediately following a storm, children tend to focus on negative aspects of the storm, such as the flooding, the destruction, or evacuation. As they work through their feelings, their play will become more sophisticated and, with adult support, will begin to focus on the positive aspects of the event, such as the roles of the rescue workers, doctors, nurses, families, and volunteers.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Burying toys in a pile of clothes and then retrieving them	Has this child returned home to find toys buried in rubbish?	<i>You found the toys! I bet you were glad to find them. Let's see what else we can find in there.</i>
Nurturing dolls to keep them safe and fed	Did this child have to go without food? Is this child remembering feeling unsafe and unprotected?	<i>You're taking care of your doll by rocking and feeding it. That baby loves to be held and rocked. Do you want to sit with me in the rocker? I can rock you and the baby together for a few minutes.</i>
Pretending to be police officers, firefighters, Red Cross volunteers, doctors, nurses	Did this child witness helpers working?	<i>Look how you are helping those people! I bet they're glad that somebody came to help them. Who are you going to help next?</i>
Using child-size mops, brooms, buckets, and sponges to pretend to clean up after the storm	Is this child involved in after-storm cleanup at home?	<i>You're getting your house back in order. Cleaning up such a mess is a big job. Laura, would you like to get the mop to help Tomas clean up the water?</i>
Putting many things in a shopping cart and hauling them away	Did this child have to relocate in a hurry? Is the child making sure he has everything he needs to stay safe?	<i>You're getting all your things together to take with you. Deciding what to take is hard. Would you like to use a box as a shelf to unpack your things when you arrive?</i>
Pretending to be mommy or daddy who cries a lot	Is this child seeing his parents in distress?	<i>Oh, my, you are such a sad Mommy. I wonder why you are crying. If you tell me, maybe I can help you.</i>
Pretending to visit relatives or go on trips	Did this child have to relocate one or more times?	<i>I see you've packed up and are ready to go on a trip. Having family and friends to stay with is nice. Would you like me to pretend I'm your grandma who is waiting for you to arrive?</i>
Pretending to live with lots of people, asking many children to sit closely on a sofa	Is this child living temporarily with more than one family?	<i>There are lots of people living in your house. Is everybody going to fit on that sofa? Maybe we can make more places to sit over here.</i>

## Dramatic Play, continued

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Passing out play food and saying, "No, you can't have more"	Was food rationed to this child?	<i>Oh, oh, that baby wants more food, but there isn't any more. Poor baby must still be hungry. I think Raza has extra food for her baby. Why don't you go ask her for some?</i>
Pretending to be in charge during an evacuation and being the one who saves a person or pet	Did this child evacuate and witness an authority figure? Is this child trying to gain a sense of power by being the one who saves a person or pet?	<i>You're helping everyone get to a safe place. You know just what to do to help everyone stay safe. Can I help you?</i>
Placing toy food in Ziploc® bags and then pretending to eat	Did this child eat MREs (Meals Ready-to-Eat)?	<i>Yum! Look at that fancy package of food you made! Sometimes special foods are in a bag. Do you have one for me, too?</i>





## Blocks

Children may use block building as a way to represent their ideas and feelings about their experiences. Building with blocks can also help children channel anger or frustration. Include props such as people figures; construction vehicles (including trucks, tractors, cranes, dump trucks); boats; helicopters; ambulances; blankets; military vehicles; buses; blue tarp or blue pieces of fabric; and materials for making signs.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Building houses out of blocks and then pretending a hurricane (or monster or power figure) is knocking them down	Did this child see the destruction caused by the hurricane? Is this child trying to regain a sense of control by being powerful?	<i>I see your building got knocked down. Now there's no house anymore. Let's use our power together to build it again.</i>
Using toy helicopters or boats to rescue people figures or pets from the buildings	Was this child and his family, friends, and pets rescued? Did this child watch TV to see people being rescued?	<i>You're helping people [or your pet] get to safety. Getting a boat to save people was a good idea. Would you like to wear this vest as a life jacket so you can be safe near the water?</i>
Pretending to be a bulldozer shoving blocks in a pile	Has this child observed the clean-up effort in his community?	<i>You're moving lots of things into a pile, just like a bulldozer. When helpers use a bulldozer, it takes a lot less time to clean up. Would you like to use this basket as a dump truck to put the blocks in?</i>
Pretending to board up windows on a house	Did this child see windows boarded up before the storm? Was this child involved in preparing for the storm?	<i>You're boarding up the windows of your building. That keeps the house nice and strong. Do you need some extra carpenters to help you?</i>
Draping a piece of blue plastic over a building to protect it from rain	Was this child's roof damaged in the storm? Was the child at home when the rain came in?	<i>You're covering your roof with a blue tarp. Covering it with a tarp will help keep the rain out so your things won't get wet. Would you like me to get some tape to hold it in place in case the wind blows?</i>

Art

Art experiences provide children with opportunities to express their emotions with or without words. Offer plenty of drawing and painting materials, clay or modeling dough, and collage materials. The physical properties of many art materials are soothing and calming. Squeezing dough or moving hands in cool finger paint can be very comforting.

Offer children opportunities to engage with others in a group art project such as a mural or a group weaving. Some children may feel more comfortable working on a group project than on their own. Contributing to the work of the group can be very satisfying and help children feel as though they belong.

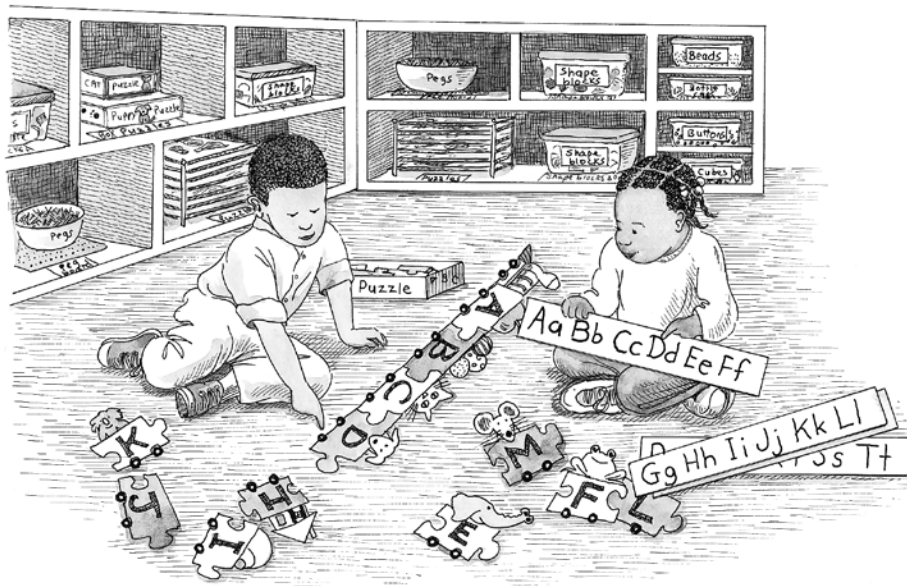
You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Representing their experiences through drawing, painting, and sculpting with clay, talking or wondering aloud as they create	Is this child beginning to work through feelings about the storm? Is this child beginning to verbalize feelings about the storm?	<i>You've used many colors in your picture. Would you like me to write your story to put with your picture?</i>
Asking how to build a strong house in the woodworking area	Was this child's home destroyed in the storm?	<i>You're working hard to make your building strong. (Call over other children in area.) We're trying to figure out how to build a strong house. Who can help us think of an idea?</i>



## Toys and Games

The Toys and Games Area offers children opportunities to play independently or work cooperatively with others. Offer materials that match children's abilities, to allow them to be successful and to foster confidence. Playing with self-correcting toys like pegboards and pegs and like puzzles can be satisfying and reassuring. Construction toys provide a way for children to represent their experiences.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Constructing rescue vehicles out of other small building toys	Is this child beginning to focus on the positive work done by helpers during and after the storm?	<i>You made a ____ [helicopter, boat]. We all feel safe when there are so many rescue vehicles around to help. What are you thinking of making next?</i>
Talking about losing their toys in the storm	Is this child beginning to express his thoughts and feelings about the storm? Did this child lose his favorite toy?	<i>Having your toys lost and broken is sad. You miss your toys. Let's find something here for you to play with.</i>
Raking toys off the shelf or dumping them out rather than playing with them	Is this child feeling helpless and wanting to gain more control of and power over the situation?	<i>Oh, the toys are all over the place! What a disaster! Come, I'll help you put it all back together again.</i>
Wanting to line up and sort things over and over	Is this child trying to restore order to his very chaotic world?	<i>You're organizing all the toys on the shelf. It feels good when everything is back where it belongs. I'll stop by in a few minutes, to see how you're doing.</i>



## Library

In the Library Area, children can relax, lie on a beanbag chair or sit in a rocker, and enjoy a good book. They are comforted by being physically close to you as you share a book. Make sure that your Library Area is filled with soft materials and is warm and inviting.

Books are ideal for starting discussions and connecting to children's experiences. Keep a variety of books in the Library Area. Include books that are likely to encourage children to talk about their feelings. Here are some titles to include

*The Village of Basketeers* (Lynda Gene Rymond)

*Clifford and the Big Storm* (Norman Bridwell)

*Walter Was Worried* (Laura Vaccaro Seeger)

*The Storm Book* (Charlotte Zolotow)

*Dumpy and the Big Storm* (Julie Andrews Edwards)

In addition to books specifically related to storms, books are an excellent tool to help children face other difficult issues. The Appendix has a list of books that are appropriate for children ages 2–5, organized around the following topics:

- adapting to change, moving, going to a new school
- comfort, reassurance, love
- courage
- friendship
- grief, sadness, loss
- resilience, pride, hope
- storms
- death
- death of a pet

You may also notice that some children are drawn to predictable books. Children feel successful as they predict what comes next. Making predictions helps them feel in control of and powerful in the story. This is important for children who have felt powerless and unable to control the situation during the hurricane.



Make a book patterned after *Fortunately* by Remy Charlip. To give children hope and look for good aspects of a situation, change the sentence frame to focus on the unfortunate situation first, followed by the fortunate one. For example, *Unfortunately, my toys were lost in the flood. Fortunately, nice people brought me new ones. Unfortunately, I had to leave my friends. Fortunately, I am making new ones.* Similar book-making activities can be centered around titles such *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown or *That's Good, That's Bad* by Margery Cuyler.

In addition to reading books in the Library Area, children may use puppets and other storytelling props to retell their experiences. Over time, pay attention to how their stories progress. In the writing area, follow children's lead when they share their experiences. Suggest that they draw a picture and that you record their words. Create books together or provide opportunities for children to write and draw in journals.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Wanting to sit close to you to listen to a story	Is this child seeking security and reaching out for comfort?	<i>You're sitting right next to me. Sitting close together when we read books is fun. Would you like to hold the book and turn the pages while I read?</i>
Reenacting their experiences using puppets or story props; relating story to own experiences	Is this child beginning to work through the feelings experienced during the storm?	<i>That puppet is going on a bus, just like you did! Does he need a special pillow at his new house?</i>
Wanting to read the same stories, especially predictable books, again and again, even more than usual	Does this child do the same thing over and over again to feel secure? Does this child feel in control when he can predict what comes next in a story?	<i>You read Are You My Mother? many times this morning. You know it so well. It must be your favorite book. Would you like to read it to me?</i>
Drawing and writing or dictating stories about their experiences	Is this child beginning to work through trauma by communicating his thoughts and feelings?	<i>You've drawn a picture of your family packing up the car to leave your house. Deciding what to put in your suitcase must have been hard. Would you like me to write your words so you can remember them?</i>

## Discovery

In the Discovery Area, children can explore and wonder about the world around them. It's a place to find the answers to questions and to spark curiosity. Children who have experienced the forces of nature associated with a hurricane will have many questions. The Discovery Area is a place where children can take care of the class pet, feel powerful as they learn to move objects and cause things to change, fix things that are broken, or calm themselves by feeling soothing materials in a sensory tub.

Many children lost pets during the storm. Teach children how to care for the class pet lovingly and be ready to respond to children's feelings about their own pets. Have children's books available that talk about the death of a pet. Continue to remind children about how to keep the class pet safe.

Bring a broken toy or small appliance to the class "fix-it" area and help children pretend to repair damaged items. Also add other tools and materials that children might have used during the storm and that they can explore further, such as flashlights, battery-operated fans with rubber safety blades, Styrofoam® containers, and radios.

Offer children the opportunity to plant seeds and flowers that they can later take home. Many homes lost their beautiful landscaping or flowerboxes. This is a way that the children can be part of rebuilding their homes.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Talking about a pet they had to leave behind or lost	Did this child lose a pet during the storm?	<i>You weren't able to take your puppy when you were rescued during the storm. Losing a pet that you love very much is very sad. I have a book about a boy who lost his puppy. Would you like me to read it to you?</i>
Saying, "Don't turn the flashlight on. You'll waste the batteries"	Did this child lose power during the storm and depend on flashlights to see?	<i>You're saving the batteries in the flashlight so we can use it in case the lights go off. Being in the dark without lights can be scary. I'll make sure we have some extra batteries. Will you help me remind others to turn off the flashlight when they are finished using it?</i>
Spending lots of time in the "fix-it" area	Did this child return home to find broken toys and household items?	<i>You're fixing the ____ [clock, toy, etc.] so it can be used again. It is so upsetting to see a favorite toy broken. I'm glad so many people are helping to put things all together again.</i>
Trying to hurt the class pet	Did this child lose his pet? Did this child see his dead pet?	<i>You're hurting the ____ [bunny, gerbil, etc.]. The bunny doesn't like it when you pull his ears. I won't let you hurt him. Would you like to pet the bunny softly like this while I hold him?</i>
Knocking down plants as if in a storm	Did this child see trees, plants, and other landscaping destroyed or knocked down?	<i>You knocked the plants down. Did you see all the trees in the street in front of the school? Let's pick up these plants to make our classroom pretty again.</i>



## Sand and Water

Sand and water experiences provide children with soothing, almost therapeutic activities. However, children who experienced the hurricane firsthand may have negative images of sand and water because of the flooding, storm surges, torrential rains, and blowing sand. Listen carefully to what children say and do in this area. Reassure them that they are safe and be ready to respond to their experiences and concerns.

Stock the water area with props such as plastic people and animal figures, boats, Styrofoam® plates or trays they can use to float things, and pumps. At the sand table, include people and animal figures, construction trucks, and natural items such as rocks, tree branches, or twigs.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Floating plastic people and animal figures in water	Did this child see people drown or dead bodies floating in the water?	<i>There are so many people and dogs in the water. I wonder if they're scared. Let's get some rescue boats and help them get to a safe place.</i>
Making big waves, splashing, and getting other people wet	Did this child experience a storm surge or high winds and rain?	<i>You're making big waves, and people are getting very wet. The other kids are telling you they don't like it. If you want to splash with water, we can wash the bikes outside later.</i>
Throwing the things out of the water table to save them; adding props not typically used in the water table	Did this child see many of his possessions and other objects floating in the water? Did this child watch his family trying to save items from being ruined by the water?	<i>You're taking all the toys out of the water [or putting things in the water that don't usually belong there]. It's a sad feeling when your things get ruined by water. Would you like to lay this towel by a window? We can put the toys on it, to let the sun help dry them.</i>
Building a levee with sand and breaking it so that the water flows out	Was this child close to the site where the levees broke in New Orleans? Did this child see media images of the water coming over and through the levee walls?	<i>You built a levee to hold the water back, and then you pushed the sand down so the water could rush through. When the water goes over the edge, it can be scary. Would you like me to help you add more sand and pack it tightly so the water won't go over the edge?</i>



## Music and Movement

Music and dance are important parts of many cultures and can bring a community together. Many of the areas hardest hit by the storm had a rich heritage of music: jazz, blues, Cajun zydeco. If you have displaced children in an established program, play music and learn songs from the South as a way of sharing and teaching about their culture. Teaching children songs that are familiar to families will give them an activity they can enjoy together and release stress at the same time. Here are some simple songs that preschoolers might enjoy:

- *You Are My Sunshine*
- *When the Saints Go Marching In*
- *Jambalaya, Crawfish Pie, Filé Gumbo*
- *This Little Light of Mine*

Marching to sounds of Mardi Gras music, like the *Second Line* song, can be fun for all. People of all ages enjoy Louis Armstrong's *What a Wonderful World*. Older siblings at home can enjoy joining in clapping songs, like *Miss Mary Mack*. Ask families for ideas of music or songs their children know and love. Soft instrumental music can have a calming effect and decrease children's anxiety. Play it upon arrival or at rest time to create a soothing atmosphere in the classroom.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Whipping ribbon streamers around as if they were in a storm	Did this child observe the effects of high winds during the hurricane?	<i>Look how fast the streamers are going. Let's move them very, very slowly now.</i>
Choosing not to participate in group music and movement activities	Does this child not feel safe and secure in a large group? Has this child withdrawn from friends as a result of the storm? Is this child having trouble making friends among new classmates?	<i>I see that you are watching us singing and marching. Would you like to be my partner?</i>
Banging musical instruments loudly	Is this child feeling powerless over the hurricane and trying to regain power and control?	<i>That drum is so loud, it's hurting my ears. You may play the drum softly or go pound the playdough hard.</i>

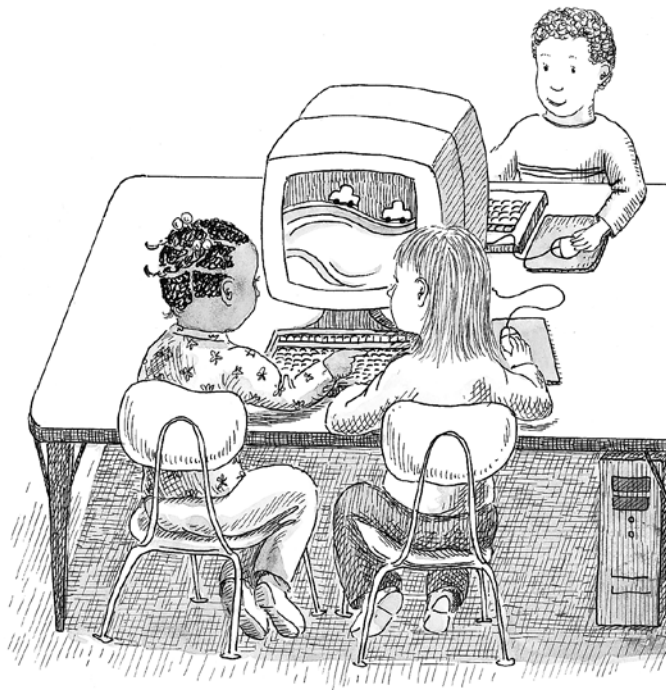


## Computers

Children can use the computer constructively to express their thoughts and feelings in the aftermath of a hurricane. Drawing or simple word-processing programs can be used to create books and stories about their experiences.

While there are many Web sites with video footage and images of the effects of the hurricane, viewing these would have the same effect as watching too much television coverage. As always, screen any Web site before sharing it with children.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Moving the mouse back and forth rapidly while using a drawing program	Is this child trying to release some frustration and anger?	<i>You're moving the mouse very quickly and the screen is covered with lines. Do you want to tell me about it?</i>
Using the same program over and over	Is this child comforted by using the same program because he knows how to use it and can predict what happens next?	<i>You've played ____ [name of software] so many times, you must really enjoy it. It's fun to play a game when you know just what is going to happen next. I have another game that's almost just like it. Let me know when you want to try it.</i>
Wanting to be at the computer for a long time	Is this child withdrawing from playing with others? Does this child find comfort in staying with one activity?	<i>You've been working hard at the computer for a very long time. Computers are a two-person activity. Whom would you like to invite to sit in the other chair?</i>



## Cooking

Cooking is another way of sharing cultural experiences in the classroom. You may want to invite families to help the children prepare snacks or foods unique to the South. Some typical southern foods include grits, cornbread, hush puppies, pralines, red beans and rice, snowballs, gumbo, and jambalaya. Be aware, however, that some children's appetites might have been affected by the trauma of the storm.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Hoarding food or saving it; not wanting to leave the cooking area where the food is always in sight; wanting to take food home to family	Did this child and family members go without food or water for a long period of time?	<i>You may eat your snack now. If you are still hungry, you may prepare another one. There is plenty of food here for everyone.</i>
Asking for favorite recipes (comfort foods)	Is food and mealtime an important part of this child's culture?	<i>Red beans and rice must be one of your favorite foods, because I hear you talk about how your grandma made it. Sometimes food reminds us of fun times sitting around the table with our family.</i>



## Outdoors

Outdoor play is essential for children’s health and well-being. Running, jumping, climbing, and even screaming can help children release tension, stress, and anxiety. It may take a while for some children to feel secure outside after experiencing the devastating effects of the hurricane. Be patient and know that a child may cling to you before feeling secure enough to venture out with the other children in the class. Continue to give the child or children verbal reassurance as they work through their fears and anxiety.

Offer cardboard boxes or bricks, crates, and foam blocks that are safe for children to use for structures and to knock down. Teach children how to use natural items imaginatively, such as by rolling acorns down a ramp, drawing a hopscotch grid in the dirt with a stick, or creating the floor plan of a house using pine needles and then playing in the rooms. A good book to help children think about playing outside is *Roxaboxen* by Alice McLerran.

You May Observe Preschoolers...	What to Consider	How You Might Respond
Pretending to run out of gas and waiting in a line for more gas	Was this child’s family stranded after running out of gas while evacuating, or did they sit in long lines at the gas pump?	<i>The gas line you’re in seems to be very long. You can get hot and sweaty, waiting in a line. Not having anything to do is also pretty boring. Would you like to sing a song or play a hand game while you wait?</i>
Pretending to be rescue workers saving a dog	Was this child rescued or injured, or did the child see injured people being helped?	<i>You’re pretending to save a dog that was hurt in the storm. It’s a good feeling when helpers come along to take care of us. Would you like me to get some strips of material that you can use to bandage the dog?</i>
Clinging to you or constantly checking to see where you are	Was this child separated from family members during the evacuation? Does this child fear abandonment?	<i>I see you looking to see if I am still here. You want to know where I am. I’ll let you know if I am going to go inside for a minute. Otherwise, I’ll be right here where you can see me.</i>
Running to you when the weather changes, especially a change in the wind or when storm clouds form	Does this child associate all weather changes with hurricanes?	<i>I see you looking up at the sky and noticing ____ [the dark clouds forming, the wind, etc]. The last storm was very scary, but this one will be a safe rain.</i>
Climbing on top of play equipment and pretending to be roofers	Does this child see rebuilding in his community?	<i>You’re working hard to get that roof repaired. Fixing all the broken things feels good.</i>
Throwing toys around in the sand box	Is this child acting out his frustration and powerlessness during the storm? Does this child have the language skills to express his feelings? Did this child see the wind blow his favorite toys?	<i>You’ve thrown the toys all over the sandbox. If you would like to throw something, let’s go find some balls.</i>

## *Taking Care of Yourself*

One of the most important things that you can do is take care of yourself. Not only are you responsible for caring for young children who have been through a traumatic experience, but you may also be healing and dealing with displacement, losing your home, losing a family member or friend, separation from those close to you, or missing your neighborhood and culture.

For children to recover, they need adults who are physically and emotionally available and supportive. Make sure that you are safe, rested, and in good mental health to help children work through their trauma. Seek help if you need it. The National Mental Health Information Center ([www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov)) offers these tips for recognizing signs of stress, burnout, and a need for help:

Burnout reactions include

- depression, irritability, anxiety, hyperexcitability, excessive rage, etc.
- physical exhaustion, loss of energy, gastrointestinal distress, appetite disturbances, hypochondria, sleep disorders, muscle tremors
- hyperactivity, excessive fatigue, inability to express self (orally or in writing)
- slowness of thought, inability to make decisions, loss of objectivity in evaluating and functioning, external confusion, etc.

It is important to recognize these symptoms and find ways to relieve the stress. Talk with others and share your experiences. Ask your director to set aside time in staff meetings to discuss personal responses to the disaster and share ideas about how to assist students and parents in dealing with their responses. Teaching is a demanding job. Learning to deal with your own responses to a disaster as well as children's responses may sometimes feel overwhelming. Staff members can help each other keep the stress at a manageable level.

For more information about responding to mental health needs in times of crisis, or to find out about local mental health services, contact 1-800-789-2647.

## *Books for Children*\*



The following books may be helpful for children who have been affected by a hurricane. The books may be used by parents or other caregivers to present difficult issues in the context of stories. Some nonfiction titles are also included. The majority of titles are intended for children ages 2–5.

### **Adapting to change, moving, new school**

*Blue Horse* by Helen Stephens  
*Boomer's Big Day* by Constance McGeorge  
*The Color of Home* by Mary Hoffman  
*Coming On Home Soon* by Jacqueline Woodson  
*Danitra Brown Leaves Town* by Nikki Grimes  
*Getting Used to Harry* by Cari Best  
*Goodbye House* by Frank Asch  
*Hannah is My Name* by Belle Yang  
*Hot City* by Barbara Joose  
*I Am Too Absolutely Small for School* by Lauren Child  
*Jorah's Journal* by Judith Caseley  
*Just One More Story* by Jennifer Brutschy  
*The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn  
*The Leaving Morning* by Angela Johnson  
*My Best Friend Moved Away* by Nancy Carlson  
*The Ticky-Tacky Doll* by Cynthia Rylant

### **Comfort, reassurance, love**

*Aunt Flossie's Hat (and Crab Cakes Later)* by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard  
*Corduroy* by Don Freeman  
*Faraway Drums* by Virginia Kroll  
*The Feel Good Book* by Todd Parr  
*Genie in the Jar* by Nikki Giovanni  
*Golden Bear* by Ruth Young  
*Good Night Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown  
*How About a Hug?* by Nancy Carlson

\* From *Booklist for children affected by Hurricane Katrina*, by the State Library of Louisiana, 2005, Baton Rouge, LA: Author. Copyright 2005 by State Library of Louisiana. Adapted with permission.

### *Books for Children, continued*

*If You Listen* by Charlotte Zolotow

*Just the Two of Us* by Will Smith

*Momma, Where Are You From?* by Marie Bradby

*Oh My Baby, Little One* by Kathi Appelt

*On Mother's Lap* by Ann Herbert Scott

*The Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown

*A Safe Place Called Home* by Eileen Spinelli

*Sing-Along Song* by JoAnn Early Macken

*Tickle, Tickle* by Dakari Hru

*We All Sing With the Same Voice* by J. Philip Miller and Sheppard M. Greene

*When the Big Dog Barks* by Munzee Curtis

### **Courage**

*Abiyoyo* by Pete Seeger

*Brave, Brave Mouse* by Michaela Morgan

*Moon's Cloud Blanket* by Rose Anne St. Romain

*There's a Big, Beautiful World Out There* by Nancy Carlson

*Twister* by Darleen Beard

*Wallace's Lists* by Barbara Bottner

### **Friendship**

*The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson

*Will You Be My Friend?* by Nancy Tafuri

*Wemberly Worried* by Kevin Henkes

### **Grief, sadness, loss**

*Tom Rabbit* by Martin Waddell

*When I Feel Sad* by Cornelia Maude Spelman

*Where's My Teddy?* by Jez Alborough

*Yesterday I Had the Blues* by Jeron Ashford Frame

**Resilience, pride, hope**

*Ashley Bryan's ABC of African American Poetry* by Ashley Bryan

*A Chair for My Mother* by Vera B. Williams

*Cherries and Cherry Pits* by Vera B. Williams

*Goggles* by Ezra Jack Keats

*The Moon Came Down on Milk Street* by Jean Gralley

*On That Day: A Book of Hope for Children* by Andre Patel

*Satchmo's Blues* by Alan Schroeder

*Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children* by Sandra L. Pinkney

*Tomas and the Library Lady* by Pat Mora

*Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen* by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan

**Storms**

*The Village of Basketeers* by Lynda Gene Rymond

*Clifford and the Big Storm* by Norman Bridwell

*Walter Was Worried* by Laura Vaccaro Seeger

*The Storm Book* by Charlotte Zolotow

*Dumpy and the Big Storm* by Julie Andrews Edwards

**Death**

*Everett Anderson's Goodbye* by Lucille Clifton

*The Grandad Tree* by Trish Cooke

*Grandma's Purple Flowers* by Adjoa J. Burrowes

*The Memory String* by Eve Bunting

*Sweet, Sweet Memory* by Jacqueline Woodson

*Up in Heaven* by Emma Chichester Clark

*When Dinosaurs Die* by Laurene Brown

*Where is Grandpa?* by T.A. Barron

**Death of pet**

*Desser, the Best Ever Cat* by Maggie Smith

*I'll Always Love You* by Hans Wilhelm

*The Old Dog* by Charlotte Zolotow

*Saying Goodbye to Lulu* by Corrine Demas

*The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* by Judith Viorst

*When a Pet Dies* by Fred Rogers



## ***Resources and Web Sites***

### **Child Care Exchange**

*Helping Children when Catastrophe Strikes* by Jim Greenman

[www.childcareexchange.com/resources/katrina/greenman\\_katrina.pdf](http://www.childcareexchange.com/resources/katrina/greenman_katrina.pdf)

### **Embrace Mississippi Hurricane Relief**

<http://embracehurricanerelief.org/>

### **Exchange Every Day**

*Helping Children Cope with Katrina*

[http://ccie.com/eed/news\\_print.php?news\\_id=1274](http://ccie.com/eed/news_print.php?news_id=1274)

### **FEMA for Kids**

[www.fema.gov/kids](http://www.fema.gov/kids)

### **Mercy Corps**

[www.mercycorps.org](http://www.mercycorps.org)

### **Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood**

*Helping Children with Tragic Events in the News*

[www.misterrogers.org/families/](http://www.misterrogers.org/families/)

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

*Helping Young Children After a Disaster*

[www.naeyc.org/families/disaster.asp](http://www.naeyc.org/families/disaster.asp)

### **National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**

[www.naccrra.org](http://www.naccrra.org)

### **National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)**

*Helping Children Cope with a Crisis: A Workbook for African American Families*

[www.nbcdi.org/programs/aapp/aapp.asp](http://www.nbcdi.org/programs/aapp/aapp.asp)

### **National Center for Post-Traumatic Distress Disorder**

*Tips for Helping Preschool Children After a Disaster*

[www.ncptsd.va.gov/pfa/Pre\\_School\\_Children.pdf](http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/pfa/Pre_School_Children.pdf)



**National Center for Rural Early Childhood Learning Initiatives**

[www.ruralec.msstate.edu](http://www.ruralec.msstate.edu)

**National Mental Health Association**

*Coping with Tragedy: After Hurricane Katrina*

[www.nmha.org/reassurance/hurricane/children.cfm](http://www.nmha.org/reassurance/hurricane/children.cfm)

**National Mental Health Information Service**

*Reaction of Children to a Disaster*

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN01-0101/default.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/KEN01-0101/default.asp)

**Helping Children Cope with Fear and Anxiety**

[www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp](http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/Ca-0022/default.asp)

**Redleaf Press**

*Responding to the Emotional Needs of Children Dislodged by Hurricane Katrina*

by Barbara Oehlberg, author of *Making It Better: Activities for Children Living in a Stressful World*

[www.redleafpress.org/client/archives/articles/rl\\_Sept2005\\_article1.cfm](http://www.redleafpress.org/client/archives/articles/rl_Sept2005_article1.cfm)

**Save the Children**

[www.savethechildren.org](http://www.savethechildren.org)

**Southern Early Childhood Association**

[www.southernearlychildhood.org](http://www.southernearlychildhood.org)

**U.S. Department of Education's Hurricane Help for Schools**

[www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov](http://www.hurricanehelpforschools.gov)

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*Notes*

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### About Teaching Strategies, Inc.

Founded in 1988, the mission of Teaching Strategies, Inc. is to enhance the quality of early childhood programs by offering the highest-quality curriculum materials, training programs, parenting resources, and staff development services that are practical, developmentally appropriate, responsive to the needs of the field, and reflect the most innovative thinking.

### For more information

Parents and teachers can learn more by visiting the Teaching Strategies Web site: [www.TeachingStrategies.com](http://www.TeachingStrategies.com)



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