



Helping Children to Cope:

What can we do to support our kids in response to stressful events?



Increasingly we are confronted by **traumatic events** in our daily lives (including: natural disasters; the COVID 19 pandemic; and private stressors, such as deaths, illnesses, Domestic and Family Violence (DFV), and financial pressures). These incidents can cause **feelings of panic** and increase our **fears** and **worries**. Whilst this is valid and normal, extensive news coverage posts on social media can heighten these feelings causing more distress, especially in children and adolescents. As adults try to **manage** and **cope**, we often feel overwhelmed and are unsure what to do.

Anxiety presents itself in many different ways...



Difficulty Sleeping



Unable to Focus/
Avoiding Tasks



Chest Pain/Feeling Unwell



Headache/Dizzy



Worried/Nervous



Angry/Frustrated



Over-planning



Difficulty Managing
Emotions

Parents and caregivers can support their children to deal with stressful events by:

- **Modelling calm behaviour.** Children may mirror the reactions of adults around them and will learn skills for how to take care of themselves from what parents and caregivers do.
- **Providing simple but honest information in a calm voice.** It is important to be careful that children are not involved in adult conversations or decision making that may increase their fear or uncertainty.
- **Encouraging comforting or distracting activities.** e.g. slow breathing, a stuffed animal or blanket to hold, or being distracted by dancing, singing, or playing games. Do not force children to talk about what is happening. Playing outside may not be safe in some circumstances. Here are [additional activities](#) for children to do inside.
- **Practicing self-care.** Finding opportunities to take a moment for yourself, express your feelings, acknowledge that it might be a scary or unknown situation, and reach out for support.

KEEP CALM. STAY WISE. BE KIND

Tips to support your child:

- **Healthy lifestyle** - Keep active, eat well, maintain regular sleep patterns, connect with family/ friends and try to engage in some activities that they enjoy.
- **Routines & Structure** - Keep to a routine and inform your child in advance of any changes or disruption, if possible to do so.
- **Mindfulness** - Teach your child to be mindful (e.g. paying attention to the present moment).
- **Breathing** - When you're anxious, your breathing becomes faster and shallower. Teach your child to deliberately slow down their breathing.

Seek **professional help** if you think anxiety is significantly affecting your child's health, wellbeing and happiness.

Useful Resources



<https://www.beyondblue.org.au>



<https://raisingchildren.net.au>



www.kidshelp.com.au



www.blackdoginstitute.org.au



<https://au.reachout.com/>



<https://www.smilingmind.com.au>