

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Growing together through natural disasters - Shelter

Information and activity sheet for families with babies and young children



Going to an emergency shelter can be scary and upsetting for the whole family. Young children may feel overwhelmed by all the people, bustle and noise.

Little people manage their feelings through their relationships with parents and other caring adults.

It's important to look after your own emotional wellbeing so you can stay calm and support your child.

If your child doesn't seem to 'be themselves', think about what their behaviour may be telling you. They may need more reassurance and connection with you. Sometimes they might need more support from their teacher or educator, doctor or child health nurse, or another professional.

In times of stress, babies and young children may

- become worried, but may not have the words to tell you
- be clingy or whiny, cry, seem more helpless or emotional
- have tantrums or become aggressive
- eat less or more than usual
- have trouble sleeping, have nightmares, or seem more tired than usual
- want to be closer to their parents or carers, needing more cuddles

Parents and carers can

- read the story over the page with your child and talk about the pictures
- name your child's feelings, for example, 'You seem to be feeling sad'
- spend time each day having fun with your child, for example blowing bubbles, playing games, reading stories
- make sure your child's favourite toy or blanket is always handy for comfort

- answer questions honestly in language your child can understand, but don't give more information than they need
- maintain regular routines like meal-times, bath-time, getting up time
- limit your child's exposure to media about the event (TV, radio, newspapers, online)
- keep adult conversations about the event away from babies and young children

Let others help

- talk with your child's other carers, such as kindy teachers, about how your child is feeling
- stay in contact with friends, family and other parents by video-chat and phone if not in person
- do things that are good for you, to look after yourself physically, socially and emotionally

If you or your family are finding it difficult to cope, professional help is available.



Where to get help

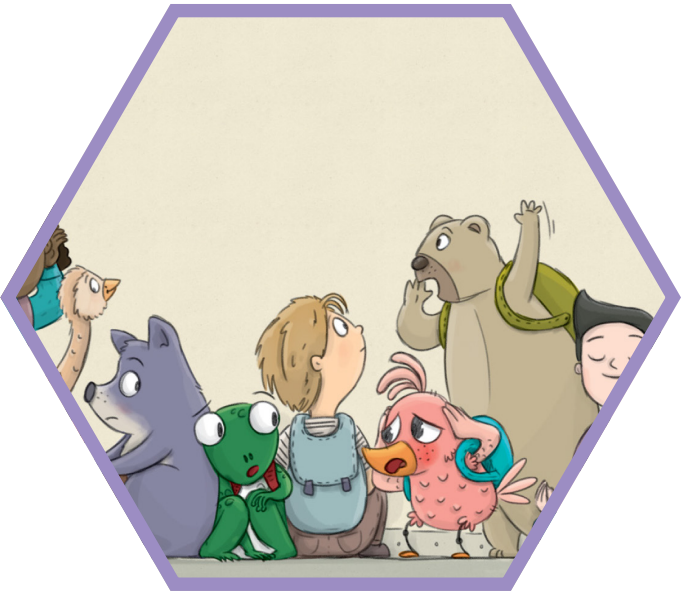
- Your doctor or child health nurse
- 1300HEALTH 13 43 25 84
- Lifeline (24hr) **131 114**
- beyond blue info line **1300 224 636**



Birdie and the Shelter



One day, Birdie and Mr Frog had to go to an emergency shelter.



'I don't like it here!' Birdie shouted. 'It's too busy. I want to go home!' 'This is the safest place right now,' said Mr Frog.



Birdie and Mr Frog did some puzzles and colouring in. It was very noisy, but when Helper Sam sang a song, everyone joined in.



Later, Birdie and Mr Frog could go home. They felt safe and happy again.





© Queensland Government August 2023

Read the full version of Birdie and the Shelter, watch the animation, play games and get more information on the Birdie's Tree website. Browse 'Birdie's Tree'

Birdie's Tree - Growing together through natural disasters | CHQ (health.qld.gov.au)

Contact us

 31 Robinson Road | Nundah | QLD 4012

 07 3266 0300

 www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/

