




SUPPORTING TAIOHI/YOUNG PEOPLE AFTER A TRAUMATIC EVENT

In the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, it will be normal for taiohi / young people to feel anxious and worried.

Here are some tips for mentors and whānau to support taiohi at this time.

- Talk with your taiohi / young person about what has happened, and what is being done to help us all pull through, in a way they can understand. Be honest but make the information age-appropriate – don't overdo it or it can lead to overwhelm.
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- Share the positive stories you hear of support and care being shown in the community.
 - Be prepared to answer questions – sometimes the same question over and over again. This is their way of making sense of the situation.
 - Talk about different feelings people, including you, may have after such an event. Acknowledge how they are feeling. Fear, sadness, guilt and anger are all common emotions felt after a natural disaster. Show empathy, e.g., "I can see that you are feeling mad/sad, do you want to talk about it?"
 - Use opportunities to teach how to manage emotions by stating how you are managing your own, e.g., "I'm feeling a bit sad. Now that the sun has come out, let's go for a walk to help me cheer up a bit" OR "I'm feeling a little overwhelmed, I might take 5 minutes quiet time" OR "Whoa, I lost my temper there. Hey, there's a lot going on, I'm pretty full up, so I'm really sorry about that, I needed to take a deep breath. Now, let's try that again".
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- Reassure your young person that they are safe and being taken care of.
 - Take care of yourself and keep calm to better help taiohi (*see page 2). Kids look to adults to know how safe to feel.
 - Allow children to keep as much of their daily routines as possible and spend time together as family and whānau and/or with a trusted adult mentor.
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- Organise for your child/children to spend time with their friends.
 - Remind your young person they have got the skills to get through hard things e.g., how they got through Covid or other hard things they have got through in the past.
 - Monitor exposure to media coverage, including television, radio, social media and newspapers.



Behaviours

Following a traumatic event like a natural disaster, it is normal for children, teenagers, and adults to have strong feelings, reactions and changes in behaviour.

Just as it is ok for adults to not be ok, so it is for our young people. Making sure you take care of yourself and using some of the tips from below will help you navigate this period. If you need more help, reach out to someone. Some of the resources and support listed below may also help you.

How our taiohi feel and react can differ based on a number of factors:

- The child's age
- Prior experience of trauma
- Other stressors in their lives (including pre-existing conditions, adversity or challenges they are facing)
- The response's and coping strategies displayed by those around them
- Media exposure.



Practice being present in the moment with these tips

- Mindfulness – slow deep belly breathing, pay attention to the present moment – what can you see, hear, smell, feel, touch?
- Listen and/or dance to music
- Take a short walk and get some fresh air
- Do an activity together quietly - colour in, read a book, do a puzzle
- Practice gratitude – remember to think and talk about what you can be thankful for.



**** Taking Care of Yourself***

The most important thing you can do is take care of yourself. Pay attention to your own needs and feelings.

If you take care of yourself, you will be better able to support your taiohi. Get back to basics:

- Remember to eat, include plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Get some regular exercise if you can
- Try to limit alcohol and drink plenty of water
- Get a minimum of 6-8 hours sleep a night
- Talk to other adults about your feelings and what is going on
- When times are tough, it's normal to feel a bit worried, frustrated or overwhelmed. As we recover, going back to basics and focusing on the things you CAN control, can really help.
- Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing – connect with people, places that energise you
- Seek help if you need it – if you are unable to sleep, are feeling an unmanageable heightened level of anxiety, or you are regularly feeling unable to contain your emotions
- Practice relaxation techniques. Deep breathing is a great way to calm down in stressful situations. The key is to remember to breathe into your belly, and breathe out for longer than you breathe in. This is what sends a signal to your brain that you can calm down.



