

How to Calm Children during Times of Stress



CAN-COPE: Calming, Normalizing, Connect & Hope

Calming

At first, calm the body

Breathe

Hold your breath in, and then exhale very slowly through your lips.



Regulating our Breathing

Pay attention to how the air makes its way into the lungs and out; Is it warm? Cold?

Imagine the shape, color, and movement of the air.

Introduce change to the rhythm - we release the air that comes out with a very slow exhalation through the lips. You can make the sound "shhhhhhh".

Add a **counting to the breathing** - inhale 1,2,3,4; Stop 1,2; Long and slow exhalation 1,2,3...6.

Did you succeed? Excellent - repeat this exercise several times.

Playing with soap bubbles - exhale gently to create one biiiiiig balloon.

Jump in place - shake your body, dance to music you love

Increase physical contact - hugs and massages

Exercise muscle relaxation - click [here](#) for a demo video.

Afterward, soothe your thoughts.

Talk about what is happening - sit with the children at eye level, explain using simple words, without overwhelming them with information, and finish with a message of hope, for example: "Together we are strong".



Normalizing

Normal responses to an abnormal situation

Explain that sirens and booms are very unpleasant

- in situations like these, responses such as fear, trembling, crying, nervousness, feeling worried, refusal to leave the shelter or the house, are natural. It happens to many people - both children and adults.

There is no need to be ashamed or to fear the reaction - we can help ourselves regulate it (see the Calming section). To explain what happens to us during times of stress, [click here](#).



Connect

Encourage social gatherings on zoom or mutual visits.

Offer to volunteer and help other members of your community.

Have joint family activities - a meal, games, sports

Hope

Give children a sense of control over the situation - give them responsibilities and chores at home (such as - the responsibility for the shelter's equipment, a flashlight, water, and games). Encourage them to be active and to help others be active as well.

Remind the children that this is a temporary situation and to think about the future return to routine - what fun things would we like to do?

Increase playing, smiling, and using humor at every opportunity.



Implementing a Sense of Calmness into your Daily Routine

Creating and maintaining an emergency daily routine - decide on set hours for: waking up and going to sleep, social gatherings, sports, playing, family activities, and relaxation.



Parents

Don't forget to take care of yourself - regarding diet, sleep, and emotional support - so that you can provide your children the sense of security and peace of mind they need.

We recommend consulting with a professional if you have any doubts, concerns, or questions.



Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center

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