

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Newsletter

Recovering Together - Flood Recovery Information for Families with Babies and Young Children

Hello to all parents and carers of babies and young children.

Disasters such as storms, floods, cyclones, fires and earthquakes can have a significant physical and emotional impact on us all whether we are directly or indirectly affected.

In very severe disasters, nearly everyone has some reaction and **emotional** response to the trauma caused by these disasters. This emotional response affects people of all ages, in different ways. This effect can occur immediately or only later on, sometimes even long after the crisis has passed. It is common that immediately after a disaster people of all ages will experience a range of thoughts, feelings, physical reactions and behaviors that can be intense, confusing and frightening. These reactions can be moderate to severe and fluctuate over time. In most cases, these experiences are at their worst in the first week, and usually improve and fade over a month.

Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable and can easily become distressed by what is happening in the world around them. In addition, anything that has a serious effect on, or creates stress within the family, can make them feel unsafe and insecure.

It is through their **relationships with parents** and other caring adults that babies and young children manage their distress, which in turn will help to limit any long term impact on their physical development and social and emotional well-being. For parents and carers to be able to provide the best possible support to babies and young children that are in their care, it is important that they also look after their own emotional well being.

It is especially important to remember at this time that **babies and young children communicate through their behaviour**. If your baby or young child is currently more clingy, demanding or challenging, the best way to help them is to think about what they could be “telling” you.

You will find more information and suggestions about this on the back of this newsletter. There is also a short story to read or talk about with your child.

Don't hesitate to seek professional help at any time if you or your family are struggling to recover following the disaster.



Where to go for help:

Your local doctor (General Practitioner)
Local Child and Youth Mental Health Service
13 HEALTH (Child Health).....13432584
Lifeline (24hr).....131114
beyondblue info line1300 224 636

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The Adventures of Giddy

Giddy and the flood



It was raining at Giddy's house.

It rained and rained.

There was lots of water in the garden.

Giddy saw on the television that some rivers were full of water.

The water went into some houses and made the furniture wet.

This made Giddy and his friend Giva worried. And they looked outside to check that everything was ok.

Don't worry Giddy! There are lots of grownups to keep you safe!

Giddy and Giva did some drawings together.

Soon the water went away.

The grownups fixed the houses and the furniture.

Giddy felt much better.

Things you can do

1. Read the Giddy story and talk about the pictures together.



2. Stay connected with others.
3. Name your child's feelings.
4. Talk to a professional and ask for help if necessary.
5. Talk to your baby or young child's childcare worker
6. Look after yourself.
7. Try and spend time having fun with your baby or young child each day. Choose activities you know they enjoy e.g.:

- ☺ Bubbles
- ☺ Play dough
- ☺ Reading
- ☺ Trip to the park



Did you know that in times of stress...

- ◆ Babies and young children can become worried but may not have the words to tell you.
- ◆ They may become more clingy, whiney, have more tantrums or be more helpless.
- ◆ They might be more aggressive and cry a lot.
- ◆ They might eat less or more and have difficulty sleeping.
- ◆ They might need repeated reassuring that they are safe.

Giddy says, remember that....

- ◆ Babies and young children find regular routines calming.
- ◆ It is normal for babies and young children to want to be closer to their parents in times of stress.
- ◆ A special toy can be a comfort - replace lost or damaged ones as soon as possible.
- ◆ News footage on the TV, radio or newspaper can make babies and young children even more worried.
- ◆ Answer questions honestly but don't give more information than is needed. Babies and young children often understand more of adult conversations than we realise. Try to limit discussing worrying topics in front of your baby or young child.