

Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute

How Teachers Can Help

Classrooms and schools can provide routines for children that create a sense of safety. Teachers can be a source of comfort and help children cope with their feelings about the storm. The following list includes some things teachers can do to support children and youth:

- Creating routine in the classroom. This makes things predictable and provides a sense of control in children.
- Allowing students to help plan activities or make decisions about their day.
- Being flexible with instruction. Students may have a hard time with focusing and learning. They may need extra time to understand lessons.
- Providing a place where students can go if they would like to talk to someone.
- Being available to talk to students. Let them know that someone is there to support them.
- Helping children see how others in the community are making the situation better.
- Helping students deal with emotions in creative ways. Drawing, playing music, or writing may help students who don't want to discuss their feelings.
- Encouraging positive ways to deal with fears. Ask students to talk about things they have done in the past to deal with stressful situations. Encourage them to use those skills now.
- Recognizing that it may take longer for some students to recover. Recognizing that some students may have setbacks.
- Encouraging students to take part in positive activities.
- Watching how adults talk about the storm around students. Some types of talk may make some students worried and fearful.
- Helping caregivers find resources in the community.

Children look to the adults in their life for comfort. They may also use adults as models for their own emotions or behavior. Teachers need to take care of themselves. Here is a list of ideas you could use:

- Taking care of yourself emotionally and physically. You and/or your family may have been affected by the hurricane, too. In order to be a support to your students, you need to take care of yourself.
- Finding support from other teachers and peers. Plan how to cover tasks for each other, if needed.
- Trying not to overdo hurricane clean-up activities. Clean up can lead to injuries.
- Holding off on making major decisions during this stressful time.
- Taking care of your own family's needs.