

# Finding Comfort During Emergencies

We have all thought a lot about and planned for how to respond to a variety of emergency situations - those that require us to shelter in place and those that may necessitate an evacuation and temporary relocation. For the children in our care, these moments can cause stress and anxiety. Planning some routine and calming activities into these situations can help the children (and you) cope with the feelings that may arise. With each activity you will need to determine if the space permits or the danger is past and you are just waiting for an all clear, etc. Be creative, be calm, and adjust activities and soothing actions to meet the needs of the children and the scope of the emergency situation.

## What is a Care or Comfort Kit?

This collection of items and ideas can vary from site to site, but will contain things that bring comfort to the children. They may provide calming sensory experiences, soothing routines, or just ways to stay busy and occupied until normal activities and settings can resume.

These simple, everyday items can be easily stored in a covered shoebox tote that is easy to take with you or store at an alternate evacuation site without taking up lots of space.

- **Lotion:** Rub the lotion on your child's hands and/or feet. You can ask if they'd like to rub lotion on your hands too. Gentle hand or foot massage can be very soothing.
- **Bubbles:** Ask your child to practice deep & controlled breathing by blowing the biggest bubble they can. Then ask them to blow as hard as they can, creating many small bubbles-repeat.
- **Play-Doh:** Ask your child to squish the Play-Doh as hard as they can with their hands, letting it squish between their fingers. Ask your child to mold an item that makes him/her happy & discuss.
- **Crayons & Journal, Notebook or Sketch Pad:** These can be used for creative drawing. You can provide topics such as "something that makes you sad" or "something that helps you calm down." Discuss your child's drawing & answer their questions honestly. Some children may like to journal about how they are feeling. Tell your child he/she can choose to share parts of the journal or drawings with you. Focus on listening if they do share.
- **Rubber Ball or Stress Ball:** Ask your child to squeeze the ball gently, followed by squeezing the ball very hard. Talk about how stress & anger have different levels, from small to very large. Children can squeeze or bounce their stress ball based on their level of stress.
- **Stuffed Animal:** Your child may enjoy sleeping with or carrying around a stuffed animal, even if he/she is an older child. These are also helpful for pretend play.
- **Stickers:** Stickers are great for decorating, storytelling, and distraction. Scented stickers allow children to use their sense of smell, which helps them interpret their surroundings.
- **Fruit Snacks:** Chewing these gummies allows children to use their sense of taste & the hard chewing motions can be stress relieving.
- **Yoga poses:** If room permits, have children do some yoga poses. There are a few that can be done in a very small space, which will allow a focus on calming self.
- **Head bands:** Use the headbands for individuals or pairs of children to stretch from small to large, in a slow, steady pulling motion. Without equipment, you can have two children face each other while sitting cross-legged, hold each other's hands, then gently rock back and forth. They could sing or hum Row, Row, Row Your Boat. These activities offer ability to move while inducing calmness.

- **Copycat:** Have one child lead. They make a face, move a body part, hum a tune, repeat a phrase, etc. Everyone else must copy. Give each child a chance to lead. This can also be adapted to be a 'mirror' activity, done in pairs. One person makes a face or movement, the other mirrors the movement or face as if they were a mirror.
- **Flashlight:** Use the flashlight to play shadow games if it is dark. Try a flashlight dance: shine the flashlight on body parts, and child needs to move that body part in a dance move (wiggle, shake, clap, etc.).
- **Play I Spy:** Look around the room and 'spy' items and give clues. If it is a sparse room, just spy colors, patterns, hair color, eye color - I spy someone with red hair and blue eyes.
- What else might work for your specific group?

Information adapted from:  
Child Care Aware® of Southern Missouri and  
Child Care Aware of Minnesota West/Central - Region 6E