

FAMILY

MEDIA

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GOVERNMENT

HOUSING &  
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CULTURE

LAW  
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SERVICE/  
FRATERNAL  
ORGANIZATIONS

# KEEPING OKLAHOMA STRONG

EDUCATION

AGRICULTURE

BUSINESS

HUMAN  
SERVICES

PARENTS

COMMUNITY



# KEEPING OKLAHOMA STRONG

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Funding for this publication funded in part with support from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services using federal grant resources only.

Terri White,  
Commissioner.

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For more information about the department and its programs, call (405) 522-3908 or visit [www.odmhsas.org](http://www.odmhsas.org)

**B**eing strong doesn't just happen. If it did we would all be athletes and Olympians. Becoming strong and staying strong is an ongoing, lifelong process. It takes time, commitment, planning, and involves many different factors, including our own individual make up and biology. All these principles apply to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual strength.

As the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, part of our mission is to promote healthy communities and keep Oklahoma strong. We hope the information in these pages will help you as caregivers, children, community members, and educators with resources and plans for whatever physical or emotional storms you may experience.

Everything has a limit. Whether we are talking about bridges, bodies, or brains, these things have a certain amount of stress they can bear before they need the three R's: relief, repair, or reinforcement. No person or thing has ever been created to bear it all. So part of Keeping Strong is knowing when and how to ask for and access those 3 R's.

Once we have the skills to manage the stress put upon us, that's when Oklahomans can stand up and stay strong.



Jayme Shelton is the Public Information Officer for the City of Moore. In his role, Jayme has partnered with many agencies and organizations, including the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, to help storm victims access available resources. Having seen the devastation first hand, Jayme relays the importance of mental health in the wake of disasters.

"There are parts of the community that aren't connected, that weren't in the path of the tornado, but were still affected..." Jayme explains, "...they all have a story too. I think it's important that they have an opportunity to tell their story and also make sure that they're processing those moments in an appropriate way that's healthy."

"People don't want to talk about invisible wounds. It's easy to fix a broken arm or easy to put a bandage on a cut or something... There's twenty thousand groups coming in to build a new shed or fence or house, but there's not twenty thousand groups coming in to take care of letting people tell their story."

Jayme goes on to explain that trauma can effect anybody. He doesn't want to think about the next time the sirens go off, but he knows that avoiding them won't fix the less obvious struggles people may have after these traumatic events.

"It's important that people who live through it once, use those experiences to make some changes if they have to go through it again."

Michelle Fowler is a counselor at Plaza Towers Elementary, a school directly effected in last year's storms. Michelle talks about the importance of understanding childhood trauma, especially in the wake of the May 20th tornado in 2013.

"First of all these are children and they're growing and developing everyday. These children have experienced a trauma and it's a process for them to go through," Fowler explains. "No one can recover in a week or two from a trauma event, and these kids are processing and growing and developing and it's going to take them more than just a year to be able to get over some of the aspects."

Michelle works with children on a daily basis, and she emphasizes the need to establish coping skills, not only when faced with adversity on school grounds, but also to take home to their families.

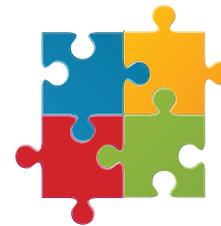
"If a little bit of that even gets back through the kids, it gives them more strength and power at the house as well. I want them to be able to feel strong and confident and safe at home as well. Family structure is really important to support the kids."

She goes on to explain that self-care isn't just for the kids, promoting mental health in the school faculty and staff to keep everybody comfortable. But most of all, dealing with trauma is a long term investment.

"Some of them will get through it quickly and some of them, it will take a little while. It's a process."



# CAREGIVERS AND COPING



## Parent Guidelines for Helping Students after a Tornado

### **FIRST: Take Care of YOURSELF!**

- Take care of yourself. Make sure you take good physical care of yourself, including eating well, sleeping well, and receiving proper medical care.
- Listen to each other. Parents and other caregivers should provide support for each other during this time.
- Put off major decisions. Avoid making any unnecessary life-altering decisions during this stressful period.
- Give yourself a break. Try not to overdo.
- Model those important self care behaviors for your child

### **THEN: Take Care of Your Child**

- Two of the most important things a child needs regardless of the circumstances is maintaining routine and play time. Maintaining routine even in the midst of chaos and change helps children feel more safe and secure. Playing, reading, and cuddling, all help your child feel connected.
- Spending extra time and talking with your child, letting them know it's okay to ask questions and express their concerns.
- Limit media exposure about the event, via newspaper, internet, or television. This also applies to adult conversations that might be overheard.
- For more things you can do, please visit [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org)

Parent Guidelines for Helping Children After a Tornado, Helping Your Children Heal, Tips for Parents on Media Coverage  
<http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/natural-disasters/tornadoes#tabset-tab-5>

## Calming and Coping 101

Whether we are a child or an adult, we all react differently in stressful situations. However, children's reactions to stressful or traumatic events are strongly influenced by how their caregivers cope during and after. That is why it is so important to take care of yourself, but also to have some ideas of how to help your child with their own thoughts and feelings.

Sometimes what works best is remembering those natural coping skills that work everyday. What are the things that help you and your child feel better under less stressful circumstances? Take a moment and write a list of those natural coping skills. Make sure to include your child in the process. Ask them what makes them feel better, You may be surprised by what they share!

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But the most important thing to remember is that having reactions of anxiety, fear, worry, guilt, and even behavioral changes are completely natural. But if symptoms persist, increase in intensity, or as a caregiver you have questions and concerns, seek professional help.

In addition to behavioral health professionals, you may wish to talk to your child's school counselor. Talk to your child's physician or other trusted healthcare provider. You may also talk to clergy, family, or friends. Talk about your child's needs, and do not be afraid or ashamed to ask for help.

## FREE Resources from Little Children, Big Challenges

Young children face new challenges at every age and stage—that's why it's so important to help them build the skills they need to become resilient. With self-confidence and the ability to express themselves, little ones will be able to handle whatever may come their way...and will just keep getting stronger.

<http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/challenges>

### Calming and Coping Ideas

- Blowing bubbles! Try to blow slow bubbles and big bubbles,, even if they are imaginary.
- Play I spy with a twist! Identify everything you can see and then if it close enough to touch, describe how it feels.
- What are your favorite things? List as many of your favorite things as possible. Colors, pets, places, foods, smells, etc.
- Animal Exercises – stretch your back like a cat, move your head and shoulders like a turtle in and out of its shell, walk like an elephant sweeping the ground, and make up your own animal exercise
- Play the Alphabet Game (this is really great for youth) Say a movie, TV show, or Video game for every letter of the alphabet
- Have something to hold, blanket, pillow, stuffed animal.





# KIDS KEEPING IT CALM

## Games & Activities

- Story Building - one person starts the story and then the other adds to it during their turn.
- Charades
- 20 Questions
- Shadow Puppets
- Card games and dominoes
- Have a dance contest
- Make something/crafts
- Put on a mini play
- Play Hide and Seek
- Sound Search
- Have a paper airplane contest

## Family Communication Plan

Emergencies can happen at any time. Do you know how to get in touch with your family if you are not together?



Unless you are in immediate danger, send a text. Texts often have an easier time getting through during emergencies, and you don't want to tie up phone lines needed by emergency responders (like 911).

### Know the Numbers!

Home: _____	Adult: _____
Parent: _____	Home: _____
Cell: _____	Cell: _____
Work: _____	Neighbor: _____
Parent: _____	Home: _____
Cell: _____	Cell: _____
Work: _____	Neighbor: _____
My cell: _____	Home: _____
Sibling: _____	Cell: _____
Cell: _____	Out of state friend/relative: _____
Sibling: _____	Home: _____
Cell: _____	Cell: _____

*Memorize your home and parents' cell phone numbers!*



<http://www.ready.gov/kids>

Cut this out and keep it somewhere safe like your backpack, school notebook, or wallet. Or input these numbers into your cell phone if you have one.

# KIDS KEEPING IT CALM



## Ways to Help Yourself

- Talk about your feelings
- Take a break from TV
- Eat right and exercise
- Try to get along and remember, they may be having sad, scared, or angry thoughts too.
- Do something to help calm down before you go to bed, like listen to music or read a book.
- Don't sit around bored! Read a book, play a game, call a friend.

## Ways to Help Others

- Try to listen and help out
- Show your friends and family that you love them
- Do things to help other families through church or school, be a community volunteer.
- Spend time talking or playing with your friends
- Talk to your friends about your concerns
- Remember: Doing things to help people can make you feel good to.



## TORNADO WARNING SCRAMBLE

What's up, guys and girls? I'm Tommy Twister, the tornado safety expert. My job is to remind you to take action when there is a tornado warning in your area. To help you remember what to do before a tornado, I created a fun game with a twist – check it out!

Below is a list of words for you to unscramble. These are words that might come to mind when you think about tornadoes. First, unscramble each word. Then, look for the circled letter in each word. Copy these letters, in order, into the blank spaces near the bottom of the page. You will see a secret message!

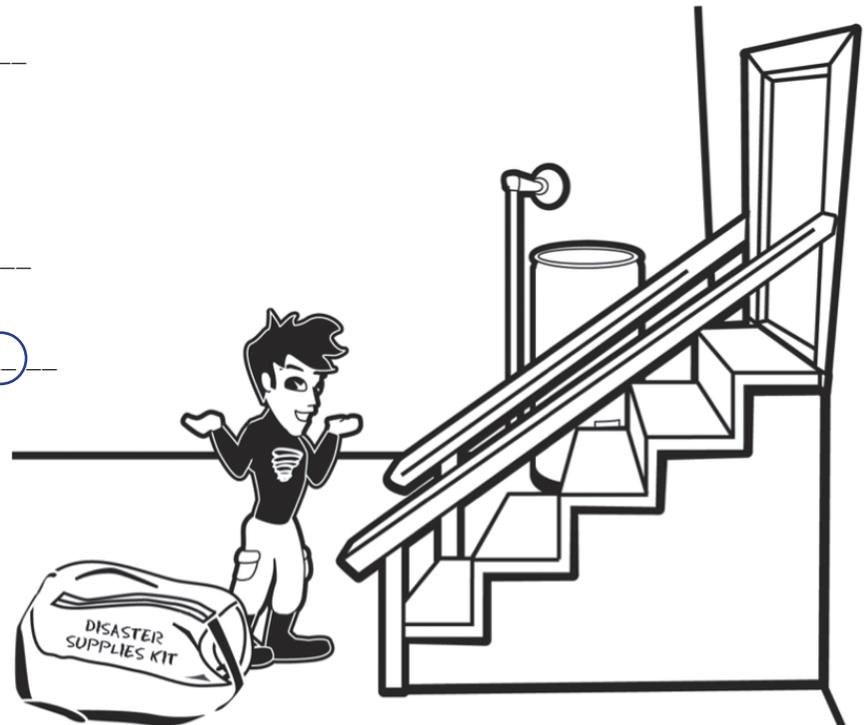
arido \_\_\_\_\_ (o)  
 wheater \_\_\_\_\_ (e)  
 ydwni \_\_\_\_\_ (i)  
 duclo \_\_\_\_\_ (l)  
 risbed \_\_\_\_\_ (d)  
 dorantoes \_\_\_\_\_ (o)

nelfun \_\_\_\_\_ (n)  
 owl \_\_\_\_\_ (l)  
 doculy \_\_\_\_\_ (l)  
 terswit \_\_\_\_\_ (t)

G \_ O \_ \_ U \_ \_ A E P A \_ \_

Congratulations!

Now you know what to do if there is a tornado warning!





# DON'T LET ONE DISASTER LEAD TO ANOTHER

## COPING WITH TRAUMATIC EVENTS ANNIVERSARIES

As the anniversary of a disaster or traumatic event approaches, many survivors report a return of restlessness and fear. Psychological literature calls it the “anniversary reaction” and defines it as an individual’s response to unresolved grief resulting from significant losses. This reaction can involve several days or even weeks of anxiety, anger, nightmares, flashbacks, depression, or fear.

However, the anniversary of a disaster or traumatic event also can provide an opportunity for emotional healing. Individuals can make significant progress in working through the natural grieving process by recognizing, acknowledging, and paying attention to the feelings and issues that surface during their anniversary reaction. These feelings and issues can help individuals develop perspective on the event and figure out where it fits in their hearts, minds, and lives.

It’s important to note that not all survivors of a disaster or traumatic event experience an anniversary reaction. Those who do, however, may be troubled because they did not expect and do not understand their reaction. Knowing in advance what to expect may be helpful.

## Common Reactions Among Survivors of Traumatic Events

**Memories, Dreams, Thoughts, and Feelings** – Individuals may experience intrusive memories, thoughts and feelings about the event. They may see repeated images and scenes associated with the trauma or relive the event over and over. They may have recurring dreams or nightmares. These reactions may be as vivid on the anniversary as they were at the actual time of the disaster or traumatic event.

**Grief and Sadness** – Individuals may experience grief and sadness related to the loss of income, employment, a home, or a loved one. Even people who have moved to new homes often feel a sense of loss on the anniversary. Those who were forced to relocate to another community may experience intense homesickness for their old neighborhoods.

**Fear and Anxiety** – Fear and anxiety may resurface around the time of the anniversary, leading to jumpiness, startled responses, and vigilance about safety. These feelings may be particularly strong for individuals who are still working through the grieving process.

**Frustration, Anger, and Guilt** – The anniversary may reawaken frustration and anger about the disaster or traumatic event. Survivors may be reminded of the possessions, homes, or loved ones they lost; the time taken away from their lives; the frustrations with bureaucratic aspects of the recovery process; and the slow process of rebuilding and healing. Individuals may also experience guilt about survival. These feelings may be particularly strong for individuals who are not fully recovered financially and emotionally.

**Avoidance** – Some survivors try to protect themselves from experiencing an anniversary reaction by avoiding reminders of the event and attempting to treat the anniversary as just an ordinary day.



## Seeking Assistance

The impact of last year’s storms had a tremendous effect on individuals and families across the state. As a new storm season is upon us, it is important to be aware of how your experiences in the past, may influence your responses and reactions in the future. If you, a family member or friend are in need, please know that there are caring individuals who want to help. The ODMHSAS “OKStrong” Community Response Team is assisting people seeking services and support.

Call (405)703-0368. Text (405)496-6019. Or email us at [OK-Strong@odmhsas.org](mailto:OK-Strong@odmhsas.org).



If you are in a crisis situation, dial “911” or call your local emergency responder agency. You may also call “211” for a link to local behavioral health providers in your community. Check with your Employee Assistance Programs. Talk to your family physician or other trusted healthcare provider. You may also talk to clergy, family or friends. Talk about your needs, and do not be afraid or ashamed to ask for help.



NCTSN

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

## Teacher Guidelines for Helping Students after a Tornado

### ☐ FIRST: Take Care of YOURSELF!

You and your family have had a stressful experience and may have suffered losses and stresses like those of the students you teach. You need to prepare yourself to be able to support them.

Seek support, formal and informal; give yourself a break; take care of yourself physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually; take time to connect.

### ☐ THEN: Take Care of Your Students

Students who have been through a tornado often have difficulties with concentration, attention, and behavior. Some students may be very quiet and withdrawn, while others may be disruptive and overly active. Many will have difficulties with learning

Know and recognize common reactions: such as feelings of anxiety, fear, worry; and changes in behaviors based on age, developmental level, and history. For specific ways to help, visit [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) for free classroom resources.

What Teachers Can Do To Help Their Students & What Teachers Can Do To Help Themselves  
<http://www.nctsn.org/trauma-types/natural-disasters/tornadoes#tabset-tab-5>

Play games  
and learn!

**KNOWLEDGE EMPOWERS!**  
<http://www.ready.gov/kids/educators>

**Ready**  
Prepare. Plan. Stay Informed.

Embedded with real-world connections, these multidisciplinary lessons teach what to do before, during, and after an emergency while fostering critical 21st-century skills such as problem solving, teamwork, creativity, leadership, and communication.

Download this supplemental curriculum for grades 1-12 and engage your students with three lessons of inquiry-driven, project-based, and differentiated learning activities aligned to core subject standards

### Level 1 Early Elementary School 1st - 2nd grade

Students will learn about emergencies and how to prepare for them. From fire safety to natural disasters, they will exercise their investigative, creative, and communication skills working both individually and collaboratively.



### Level 2 Upper Elementary School 3rd - 5th grade

Students will work individually and in teams to research emergencies that can impact communities locally and nationally, and apply creativity and literacy skills to demonstrate their understanding of emergency preparedness.



### Level 3 Middle School 6th - 8th grade

Students will develop a graphic novel to show their understanding of emergency preparedness. They'll gain knowledge through research, games, simulations, discussions, debates, and other inquiry-driven activities.



### Level 4 High School 9th - 12th grade

Students will engage in discussions, multi-media research, surveys, and interviews to develop their own communication campaigns aimed at raising awareness and motivating others to be prepared for emergencies.



## Emergency Supplies

- Flashlights and batteries
- Manual can opener
- Battery operated radio
- Batteries
- Matches in waterproof container
- Utility knife
- Paper and Pencil
- Cash, traveler's checks, coins
- Paper cups, plates, towels, and plastic utensils
- Garbage bags
- Whistle
- Small, canister ABC fire extinguisher
- Needles and thread
- Plastic sheeting
- Duct Tape, scissors
- Extra set of keys and IDs
- Local map
- Small tent, compass, shovel
- Cell phone cords and chargers
- Household Chlorine Bleach and medicine dropper *When diluted nine parts water to one part bleach, this can be used as a disinfectant. In an emergency, you can use it to treat water by using 16 drops of regular household liquid bleach per gallon of water. Do not use bleach with added cleaners of bleach that is scented.*

## Food and Water

- Three days worth of drinking water, with one gallon per person per day. Do not stockpile soda.
- Three-day supply per person of non-perishable foods. Take into consideration special dietary needs. Avoid salty foods that make you thirsty and include canned foods with high liquid content.
- Water and Food for pets and animals

## Personal Items

- Extra prescription glasses, contacts lens supplies, dentures, hearing aides and batteries, if applicable
- Diapers and infant supplies
- Sleeping bag or warm blanket for each person, including pets
- Complete change of clothing for each person: including a long sleeve shirts, long pants, and sturdy shoes.
- Moist towelettes, hygiene supplies
- Toilet paper, sanitation items
- Comfort items and toys for kids
- Leash, pet carriers, pet toys

## First Aid and Emergency Medical

- Prescription medications (such as heart and high blood pressure medications or asthma inhalers) and medical supplies, such as insulin and blood pressure monitoring equipment, if applicable.
- Non prescription medications, such as acetaminophen, ibuprofen, anti-diarrhea, antacids, and laxatives
- First Aid Manual
- First Aid Kit – should at minimum include: bandages, including gauze and bandage tape, antiseptic wipes, non-latex gloves, antibacterial ointment, small scissors, tweezers
- CPR breathing barrier, such as face shield
- Germicidal hand wipes or alcohol based hand sanitizer

## Important Documents: Store in waterproof, portable container

- Birth, marriage, and death certificates
- Insurance policies and will
- Contracts, deeds, stocks, bonds
- Passport, Social Security cards
- Immunization records
- Prescription Information
- Bank account numbers, credit card account numbers and company contact information
- Inventory of valuable household goods
- Veterinary records for pets, as well as pet photos
- Documentation of current residency, such as recent water, gas, electric bill



<http://www.getreadyforflu.org/clocksstocks/GetSetHighSchoolKit.pdf>

# GET IN – GET DOWN – COVER UP

Keeping informed about the weather is the best way to avoid being caught in a tornado or severe thunderstorm. Your local National Weather Service Forecast Office provides information about dangerous weather in your area, and you should keep a close eye on this information whenever storms threaten your area. A battery operated NOAA Weather Radio with a warning alarm feature should be a part of your kit!

When a severe storm or tornado threatens, remember these basic guidelines:

**GET IN** - get as far inside a strong building as you can, away from doors and windows

**GET DOWN** - get to the lowest floor

**COVER UP** - use whatever you can to protect yourself from flying or falling debris