

How to Calm Children during Times of Stress



CAN-COPE: Calm, Normalize, Connect & Hope

Calm

At first, calm the body

Breathe

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



How to regulate breathing?

Pay Attention - to the way 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 - Release the air that comes out with a very slow exhalation through the lips. You can make the sound "Shhhhhhh"

Add **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

Play with soap bubbles - Exhale gently to create one Biiiiiiiig balloon

Jump in place - Shake your body, dance with 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: use simple words, don't overwhelm them with information, and finish with a message of hope, for example: "Together we are strong"



Normalize

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, children, and adults

There is no need to be ashamed or worry about your reactions - We can help ourselves regulate them (see the relaxation section)



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

Provide the 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 think about the future return to routine - what pleasant things would we like to do?

Increase playing, smiling, and using humor at every opportunity

Implementing Calm & satisfaction into your daily routine

Create and maintain emergency 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 turning to parent guidance regarding any doubts, concerns, and questions



Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center

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