



### **Coping Mechanisms: Children and Disasters**

Disasters can leave children feeling frightened, confused, and insecure. Whether a child has personally experienced trauma or seen the event on television, it is important for parents to be informed and ready to help ease their child's stress.

According to child psychologists, children may respond to disaster by demonstrating fears, sadness, or behavioral problems. These reactions may vary depending on the child's age.

Adult behavior, thoughts, and feelings often influence children's reactions. Parents can help meet their child's emotional needs by:

- Encouraging him or her to share thoughts and feelings about the incident;
- Clarifying misunderstandings about risk and danger by listening to their child's concerns and answering questions;
- Maintaining a sense of calm by validating their child's concerns and perceptions with discussion of concrete plans for safety; and
- Monitoring or limiting exposure to the media.