

# Being a Helper...

## Supporting Children to Feel Safe and Secure

If you see children acting like this . . .	Try doing this . . .
Being fearful, clingy, or unusually scared of being alone or separated from parents	<p>Offer frequent reassurances: "Ms. Joanna and I will be here with you all day," "I'll be waiting at the sink while you use the toilet."</p> <p>Remind children to look at photos of their family members if they are missing them.</p> <p>Point to the posted picture schedule frequently to confirm what will be happening next and where the teachers will be.</p>
Expressing fears that a disaster isn't over or will happen again	<p>Regularly provide calm, honest explanations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "People are working hard to get everything back to normal."</li> <li>• "If you get scared, come hold my hand and we'll talk about it."</li> <li>• "This rain is just regular rain. It won't turn into a hurricane."</li> <li>• "The smoke in the sky is from a factory chimney. There are no fires."</li> </ul>
Regressing to behaviors they've outgrown, such as thumb-sucking, wetting their pants, or using baby talk	<p>Remain calm and matter-of-fact. Change the child's soiled clothes, if needed, while having a regular conversation. Don't make a big deal out of these behaviors, and never criticize or shame the child. As the child recovers, the behaviors will disappear.</p>
Sleeping fitfully, not being able to fall asleep, having nightmares, or screaming in their sleep	<p>Sit next to the child before he naps, as he falls asleep. Say something like, "The teachers are here and will watch over you as you sleep."</p> <p>Play calming music and encourage the child to bring a favorite stuffed animal to sleep with.</p>
Recreating a disaster in their play	<p>Pose challenges that let the child have control over the disaster: "What could you do to make your Lego house safe from the tornado?" "Where could the people go so that the fire won't hurt them?"</p>
Acting out, aggressively hitting or kicking others	<p>Let the child know that it's okay to be angry, but it's not okay to hurt anyone.</p> <p>Redirect the child to a safe place: "Everyone gets angry at times. If you feel like hitting, you can go to the quiet corner and squeeze pillows. You cannot hit your friends, though."</p>
Being withdrawn, not talking	<p>Provide extra attention. Let the child know that you are there if she wants to talk, but don't force her to do so.</p>