

Dear Adult,

We thank you for joining us. It is our hope you and your child (ren) will have an enjoyable learning experience.

Presenting environmental issues plaguing our planet can overwhelm a child. This fact was paramount in mind during the development of this program.

Considerable effort went in to present facts in a non-frightening manner while at the same time allowing your child to feel empowered to help in some small way.

Attached is an article posted January 7, 2020 by Unicef Australia to assist parents in talking about the recent bushfires. The information seems applicable to any crisis and may be of use should questions arise.

You can find the full article on the website below:

<https://www.unicef.org.au/blog/news-and-insights/january-2020/how-to-talk-to-your-children-about-australia-s-bushfires>

Some may react immediately with changes in behaviour. These changes may include acting out, becoming clingy or changes in sleep patterns or they may be inward focused with the child becoming withdrawn and quiet.

Some children may show signs of difficulty at a later stage. Their needs will vary depending on their ages and how much they understand of what they see.

But having an open, supportive discussion with your kids can help them understand, cope and even make a positive contribution. These conversations aren't easy, but can be crucial to ensuring that children feel safe after a disaster.

[Here is a guide for how to talk with children overwhelmed by Australia's devastating bushfires.](#)

1. Focus on the child, not the distress

Start by asking your kids' permission to talk about the issue. Follow their lead and if they don't want to discuss it, don't push it.

Some children may be eager to talk about their concerns while others might find it difficult. Just remind your children that they can talk to you, their teachers and other trusted adults whenever they like.

Drawing, stories and other activities may help to open up a discussion. Don't dismiss or avoid their concerns. Be sure to acknowledge their feelings and assure them it's natural to feel sad or scared about these things.

2. Be honest, explain the truth

Children have a right to truthful information about what is happening in the world but adults also have a responsibility to keep them safe from distress. Use age-appropriate language, be mindful of their reactions and be sensitive to their level of anxiety.

[This video from ABC's Behind the News](#) explains the bushfires in Australia through the eyes of children, using safe images and language that is easy to understand.

If you don't know the answer to their questions, use it as an opportunity to explore the answers together.

3. Offer reassurance

Tell your children that you love them and remind them that the adults in their lives are doing everything they can to keep them safe. Plan to spend extra time with them as they get past the distress and anxiety. Children are resilient and hopeful.

4. Help children get back to their normal routine

We know from our work on the ground that it is extremely important for children affected by disaster to get back to playing and learning so that they can regain a sense of normalcy and routine.

In crisis spots around the world, UNICEF sets up child-friendly spaces where children have a place to feel safe, learn and play. Help your child regain a sense of normalcy by encouraging them to take part in activities they enjoy like playing with friends, reading and drawing.

5. Show them all the good people trying to help

It's important for children to know about the acts of bravery, generosity and kindness from ordinary people trying to help families impacted by the bushfires.

Sharing stories of volunteer firefighters, community leaders and every day Australians showing compassion can be comforting and reassuring.

6. Show them how they can help

Talking to children and showing how they can help others can be empowering and a vital step to restoring confidence. Get together and brainstorm ideas about what small or big actions you or they can take. Together, your kids and their friends can raise money, make posters or any other creative ideas that spring to mind.

7. Take care of yourself

You'll be better able to help your kids if you're coping well too. Children will pick up on your own response to the news, so it helps them to know you're calm and in control.

If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family, friends and trusted people in your community. If you want some extra help, get in touch with [beyondblue](#).

Make time, however small, to do things you enjoy and join your kids in doing something constructive to help the situation.