

## TEN TIPS: Helping Children Cope with Transition

Relocation due to fires, floods or earthquakes can be unsettling for children. Save the Children has prepared the following tips to help adults support children through times of transition.

1. **Take time to listen.** Children may have concerns during transition. Listen to and answer questions as simply and honestly as you can.
2. **Give children reassurance.** Assure your child that everything will be okay and that what they may be feeling is normal.
3. **Be alert for significant changes.** Note changes in sleeping patterns, eating habits, or physical and emotional wellbeing. If prolonged and significant, seek professional support.
4. **Allow children some control over their environment.** Let children plan things such as meals and activities. Allow children time and space to play.
5. **Set up normal routines.** Structure and routine help children feel safe and secure. Maintain family rules and expectations.
6. **Be sensitive to emotions.** Give children time to adapt. Be patient and supportive by allowing them to express feelings.
7. **Give children extra time and attention.** Find time for special activities with your children. They need close personal attention in order to feel safe and secure.
8. **Be a model for your children.** Children learn how to cope by watching and modeling how you respond to stress.
9. **Help children return to normal activities.** Children benefit from active socialization. Enroll them in age-appropriate activities.
10. **Say goodbye and hello.** Visit special people and places to say goodbye. To ease transition, visit places and meet people in your new area.

Save the Children is the leading independent organization creating lasting change for children in need in the United States and around the world. For more information, visit [savethechildren.org](http://savethechildren.org). Save the Children USA is a member of the International Save the Children Alliance, a global network of 28 independent Save the Children organizations working to ensure the well-being and protection of children in more than 120 countries.



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**How to Help  
Children Cope with  
Transition in  
Disasters**



**Save the Children®**



## Leaving Your Home

- Talk calmly to your child about the need to evacuate and what steps you are taking. This should include where you are going after leaving your house.
- Identify a person your child can call in case of emergency. The number should not be a cell phone; these may run out of energy. Put the number into your child's pocket or write it on a wallet, backpack or stuffed animal.
- Pack your children's medicines and prescriptions. If the child has any special dietary needs take food for at least one day.
- Ensure that you have telephone number of your child's doctor in case of an emergency or referral.
- Locate your child's important documents: Birth Certificate, Social Security Card, Medical Records and Immunizations.

## Leaving Your Community

- Talk to your neighbors and other community members about their evacuation plans.
- Know alternative routes to leave the community.
- Help your child say goodbye to the neighborhood.

## Within a Host Family or Shelter

- Explain to your child why he or she is staying with the host family (family, friends, strangers) or in a shelter.
- Limit children's exposure to images and discussions of fire. Turn off the television and hold conversations away from children.
- Ensure that children are in a safe and secure area such as a fenced yard, playground or school.
- Identify those who care about children, such as friends or adults, and those who can provide safety, such as shelter guards, policemen and medical workers.
- Engage your children in activities or school.

## Preparing to Return

- Confirm with authorities that it is absolutely safe to return. Explain to your child that it is safe to return.
- Gauge your child's ability and readiness to return if the house or neighborhood has been damaged. Do not take children into damaged areas unsupervised.
- Your child may have fears about the fire returning. Address any fears by discussing precautions the family has taken and will take in the future.
- Support your child's return to school. Actively inquire with the school about how your child is doing and whether there has been any change in his or her behavior.

## Moving to a New Community

- Explain to your child why he or she is not able to go back home.
- If possible, avoid having your children's education disrupted. Work with local educational officials to identify temporary placements for children.
- Involve your children in exploring new homes and communities. Include child-focused services such as libraries, parks and recreations centers in decision making.

## Preparing for Your Child's New School:

- Register your child for school and after-school activities.
- Visit the school with your child and meet teachers.
- If possible, accompany your child on the first day.
- Support your child through the process of making new friends.
- Familiarize yourself with school policies such as dress codes, school supplies and exam schedules.

