

Advice for adults and parents 2: Modelling for children

- It is important, first of all, that the adults in the child's life have thought about the messages that they are giving by their responses.
- It's appropriate to show your own response in a manner that works for you—through tears, hugs, talking to friends and family, prayers, music, finding a creative outlet or doing something practical to help.
- Explain to your children why you are feeling this way and what you are doing to help yourself move through this stage.
- If adults can stay calm and measured, children will take their cues that this is how to respond.
- While it is important to keep tuned to local media for important information, try to keep your viewing of recounts of the events on media and social media to a minimum, especially while children are around.
- Model to children that one way of coping is to think about others – what can you do to support or help someone else. Make sure any help you offer is relevant and appropriate.
- A traumatic event can be distressing for those affected, and those at a distance. It is a time for telling your family that you love them and that you are there for each other. Find ways to show this.
- When the major event has passed, it is time for taking stock. What have we learned from this? How can we move forward together? What might we do differently?
- It is also a time to have a plan for a reoccurrence or other unexpected events. A practical task could be to update communication details, emergency kits and evacuation plans.
- Having a plan can lessen anxiety but it also needs to be flexible as disasters don't always play out as we expect. Try different scenarios – at home, at the shops, at work or school.
- Practising an evacuation or plan ahead of time can give a sense of control as well as providing a useful rehearsal in case of a real emergency. It might also show up things that you didn't think about when you were just talking about it or putting it on paper.

This information is supplied by Professor Carol Mutch (from the University of Auckland), a researcher in disaster response and recovery from her own work and the research and advice of other experts in the field. It is designed to provide a general overview and might need adaptation for individual circumstances.