



SUPPORTING BEHAVIORAL HEALTH WELLNESS IN **EASTERN KENTUCKY**

Natural Disaster Anniversary Kit for Eastern Kentucky Communities

2023

TEAM 
KENTUCKY[®]

CABINET FOR HEALTH
AND FAMILY SERVICES

We Are Here for You

Anniversaries of traumatic events can bring up unavoidably strong emotions, thoughts and behavior for students, families, staff and communities.

As we approach the summer months, we encourage schools, workplaces, youth serving agencies, and other community partners to prepare now for the impact the anniversary of the July 2022 Eastern Kentucky floods will have on your community members.

In this kit you will find information, tips, guides and resources to support yourselves, employees, parents, children, and teens through this anniversary.

Please use these resources to support your community.

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Addressing Natural Disaster Anniversary Responses to Support Your Community



Common Anniversary Reactions

The anniversary of a disaster can provide a place for emotional healing.

It is important to understand that it is common to have reactions even years after a disaster. Help educate and support stakeholders, school staff, parents and other community partners to recognize common reactions and ways to support survivors.



Ways Communities Can Support Each Other Through Anniversaries

- **Acknowledge the anniversary and the range of responses:** Use clear language that acknowledges the past and the present.
 - *Example:* “We know that we may all be remembering what happened a year ago. A lot has changed, and we may still miss things the way they used to be. It’s okay to feel upset when we remember what we’ve lost. And it’s okay to feel proud of all that we have accomplished since then. There is no right or wrong way to feel.”
- **Maintain routines as much as possible:** Consistency and predictability are critical means of reassuring youth and adults, and helping them to stay regulated during times of stress.
- **Adjust expectations:** An individual may not be able to do as much of their usual activity level during this time.
 - You may need to repeat "asks" more.
 - You may find that youth and adults are having trouble with concentration, memory, integrating new ideas, thinking creatively, making decisions, or executing complex tasks.
 - Slow down, take your time, take frequent breaks, and focus on one thing at a time.
 - Remember, these changes are temporary and will likely improve as the stress response to the anniversary decreases.

Supporting Those Who Are Grieving During Anniversaries

Recommended:

Employers, Youth Serving Agencies and other stakeholders should plan expanded or enhanced mental health services and supports on or around anniversaries.

Ways communities can support grieving community members during anniversaries:

- **Allow room for grieving:** Anniversaries often bring up powerful feeling of loss of people, places, or things, as well as the loss of hopes and dreams.
- **Give space and normalize:** Support people where they are. There is not right or wrong way to grieve.
- **Provide time and space for healthy coping:** Allow people to process the anniversary, while encouraging healthy coping.



For Schools:

School Initiated Memorials Are Not Recommended:

Avoid formal all-school memorials. Not everyone feels comfortable with memorial services. Instead, create a sense that school is a safe place and have small conversations as needed with individual students or classes; always allow students to be quiet or be excused from those conversations as appropriate.

For Further Support:

If you or someone you know is in need of additional support please call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988**

Taking Care of You

Parents and Caregivers Navigating Natural Disaster Anniversaries

- **Acknowledge your emotions and thoughts:** Talk, write, sing or express them with trusted others and remember whatever you are feeling is okay
- **Be gentle with yourself:** Set realistic expectations and remember it may not be as easy to multi-task, make decisions, or accomplish complex tasks
- **Take care of your body:** Sleep, eat well, be physically active
- **Take care of your mind:** Find time for quiet and reflection, try a few minutes of mindfulness each day
- **Maintain a routine:** Consistency and predictability help mitigate stress responses
- **Connect with others:** Offer to help others, and accept kindness and help from others
- **Limit media exposure:** This can be highly activating and distressing even for adults
- **Seek professional help** for yourself or your children if needed



Tips for Parents and Caregivers

Helping Children/Teens Navigate Natural Disaster Anniversaries

- **Anticipate reminders will occur:** It's normal for everyone to respond to reminders with strong emotions and thoughts.
- **Be honest and acknowledge reminders:** Talk about feelings, thoughts, memories, and losses related to the floods with children to help your child understand these are normal.
- **Practice and use calming strategies:** Try deep breathing, muscle relaxation, grounding, and mindfulness activities.
- **Maintain normal routines:** This provides a sense of psychological and physical safety.
- **Limit media exposure:** Be aware of watching or reading media regarding the anniversary. Limit how much media coverage is being viewed. Have conversations to discuss and process what is being seen and felt.
- **Provide extra support as needed:** Spend extra time reassuring children at bedtime, or when being separated from parents.
- **Adjust expectations:** Simplify or repeat instructions and expect immature behavior
- **Connect with others:** Connections build support and resilience.
- **Do something to help others:** Helping others helps individuals build a sense of agency, feel valuable, and builds resilience.
- **Celebrate accomplishments:** Remind children and teens that they continue to live their lives in lots of successful ways.



Helping Children and Youth Cope with Natural Disaster Anniversaries

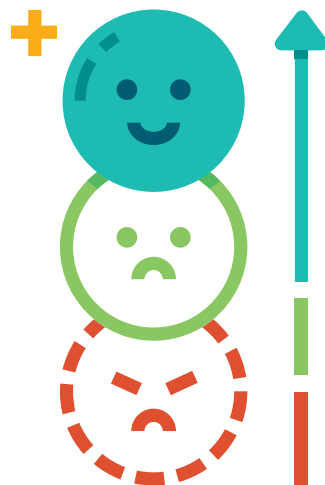
- Help children & youth recognize disaster reminders and understand their responses are normal
- Support children & youth in using calming strategies like breathing, mindfulness, grounding and refocusing to cope with trauma reminders
- Help children & youth find words and other ways to express their strong feelings and thoughts
- Recognize and celebrate accomplishments children & youth have had over the year since the event.
- Provide opportunities for children & youth to make a difference in their communities, and in their family's and their own lives
- Limit media exposure
- Remember all children & youth respond differently; allow them space to experience the anniversary in ways that work for them

Calming Activities Families Can Do Together

- **Coloring and Painting:**
 - Ask children to draw a picture of a school activity from the day. When they are finished ask questions about that and other things they did.
- **Puzzles:**
 - This can be a good engaging activity for all ages. This activity helps with communication and teamwork.
- **Reading together:**
 - Read a book to your child or read a book together with older children.
- **Play with modeling clay or playdoh:**
 - Have children pick an animal, food, thing, etc. and create that item with the clay or playdoh.
- **Exercise Together:**
 - Go for a walk or take a yoga class together.

Ways to Support Calm Behaviors

- Take slow, deep breaths
- Drop your jaw, drop your shoulders, drop your stomach
- Focus on loosening up parts of your body that are tense
- Close your eyes, picture yourself being calm
- Count backwards from 10 to 1
- Challenge or fact check your thoughts by talking to a trusted person
- Go outside and get some fresh air
- Write or journal your thoughts
- Drink some water or get a snack



BE KIND
TO YOUR
MIND

Mindfulness and Movement

Ways Employers, Schools, Youth Serving Agencies
Can Implement Mindfulness and Movement Breaks

- Try starting the day, a class or meeting with a deep breathing exercise.
 - Resource for adolescent breathing exercises:
<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/relax-breathing.html>
 - Resource for adult breathing exercises:
<https://www.healthline.com/health/breathing-exercise>
- Incorporate grounding techniques in a daily routine, staff meetings, or classroom. Grounding techniques help create a space to improve distressing feelings such as anxiety, stress, PTSD, etc.
 - Resource for grounding techniques:
www.healthline.com/health/grounding-techniques
- Take regular stretch and movement breaks.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to practice mindfulness, breathing techniques and incorporate movement breaks at home.
- Give time and space for youth and/or employees to practice mindfulness.

**Self-regulation strategies are helpful
to prevent and respond to reactions
to trauma and reminders.**



Fun Activities for Families to Promote Healthy Coping for All Ages

Please see Pages 12-21 for healthy coping activities for all ages



Healthy Coping Activities

- Exercise
- Meditate
- Make a craft
- Write in journal, poetry, stories, etc.
- Draw, color, doodle, paint
- Connect with positive friends, mentors, trusted adults
- Eat healthy
- Stay hydrated
- Sing and/or dance
- Play with a pet
- Play with fidgets, modeling clay or play-doh
- Make favorite healthy snack
- Take a nap
- Take a hot shower or relaxing bath
- Engage in your favorite outdoor activity
- Play a game with friends
- Make a favorite songs playlist
- Get together with friends and do a fun activity
- Go to or watch a movie
- Text or call a friend
- Cook and/or eat a meal with a friend or family member
- Read a book to yourself or read to others



Let's Make Your Own Calm Jar!

Materials Needed:

- Glass or plastic jars with lids, 16-ounce
- 1/2 cup glitter glue or clear glue
- Distilled water
- High-temperature hot glue gun, optional
- 1–2 teaspoons glitter



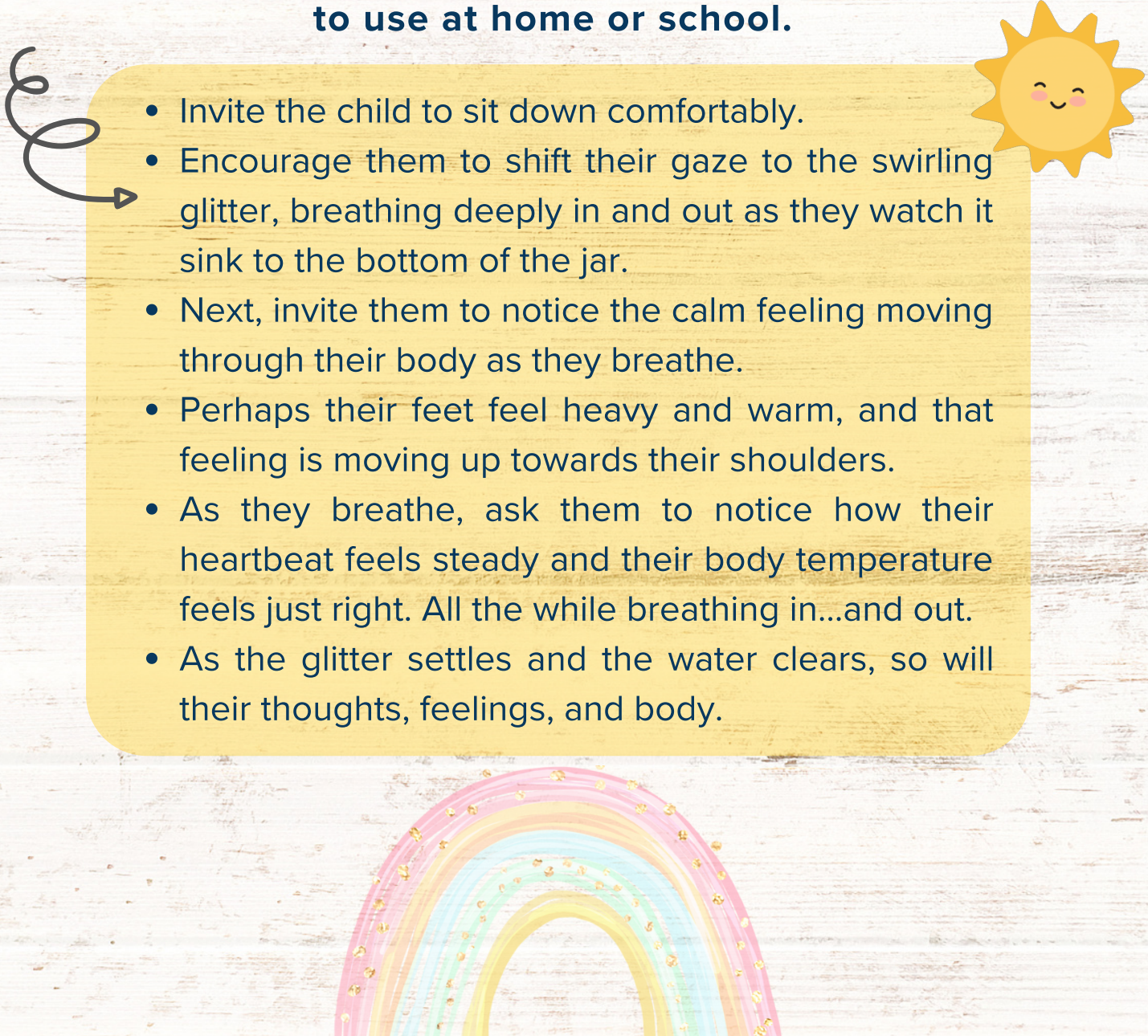
Instructions:

1. Pour 1/2 cup of distilled water into the jar.
2. Pour 1/2 cup of glitter glue or clear glue into the jar.
3. Add 1–2 teaspoons of extra glitter to the jar.
4. Fill up the remainder of the jar with distilled water.
5. If desired, use a hot glue gun to squeeze a ring of glue around the lid of the jar. Press the lid onto the jar and secure with the metal ring.
6. Shake the jar well to distribute the glitter.
7. Your DIY glitter jar is complete!



What Does The Calm Jar Do?

When kids are stressed, sad or angry, it is natural for them to have a fight, flight or freeze response. This makes it difficult for them to make rational decisions. Encouraging mindfulness through activities like the calm jar. Practicing mindfulness regularly helps reduce stress and increase mental wellness and self-control. Have fun making a glitter calm jar together to use at home or school.

- 
- Invite the child to sit down comfortably.
 - Encourage them to shift their gaze to the swirling glitter, breathing deeply in and out as they watch it sink to the bottom of the jar.
 - Next, invite them to notice the calm feeling moving through their body as they breathe.
 - Perhaps their feet feel heavy and warm, and that feeling is moving up towards their shoulders.
 - As they breathe, ask them to notice how their heartbeat feels steady and their body temperature feels just right. All the while breathing in...and out.
 - As the glitter settles and the water clears, so will their thoughts, feelings, and body.

Dried Bean Stress Balls

Materials Needed:

- Any type of dried bean or rice
- 3-4 latex balloons
- Water bottle
- Scissors



Instructions:

1. **Cut off the bottom of the water bottle to make a funnel.**
2. **Blow up ONE balloon to stretch it out.**
3. **Place the balloon around the neck of the bottle.**
4. **Use the bottle as a funnel to pour beans inside. Go ahead and stuff the balloon full, smashing them in with your finger or a wooden spoon handle.**
5. **Snip the balloon OFF the bottle.**
6. **Cut the neck off 2 or 3 more balloons.**
7. **Place a balloon over the bean ball, making sure the opening of the first balloon is centered in the BOTTOM of the balloon.**
8. **Layer one or two more balloons, always making sure the openings do not overlap.**

Note: Three layers of balloons should be good enough, but four is sturdier.

Homemade Playdough

Materials Needed:

- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 cup water
- 2 teaspoons cream of tartar
- 1/3 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- Food coloring (optional)



Instructions:

1. Mix together all of the ingredients in a 2-quart saucepan.
2. Cook over low/medium heat, stirring.
3. Continue stirring until the mixture is thickened and begins to gather around the spoon.
4. Remove the dough onto wax paper or a plate to cool.

Note: Cool completely before storing in a ziplock bag or sealed container.

Once you're done, have your child pick something to create and work together to make it! Have fun!

5 Minute Rainstick



Materials Needed:

- A tall plastic bottle
- 15 colored straws
- 1/4 cup of colored garbanzo beans and/or 1/4 cup of rice (can color rice if desired).

Instructions:

1. Empty the water from the bottle and let it dry.
2. Add 1/4 cup of colored garbanzo beans.
3. Cut up the straws in different sizes.
4. Add the straws to the bottle – one color at a time.
5. Layer as many colors as you want your rain stick to have.
6. Add 1/4 cup of colored rice leaving some space for the rice to move around.
7. Glue the lid with super glue to avoid your little one try to open it and spilling it all.
8. Shake to distribute the rice and then gently move the bottle upside down to hear the rain fall down.

Fun Activities for Teens

The act of making and crafting with your hands can improve your mood and engage your brain. Try some creative play every day to reduce daily anxiety levels.

- **Building with Legos or Blocks**- This is a great activity to complete together, spending time building a specific project or free building time.
- **Journal**- Find a notebook and create a personal journal, encourage teens to write thoughts, feelings and anything else in their journal. Parents can model this healthy coping activity also.
- **Nail Art**-Painting fingernails with others. Try playing with new colors and painting patterns.
- **Color**- The act of coloring can serve also as meditation. There are digital coloring books online offering free printable coloring pages.
- **Make Bracelets**- Make bracelets or make a friendship bracelet and give it to someone as a "thinking of you" gift.
- **Paint on canvas or rocks**- Rocks can often be found in the yard; use paint markers, acrylic paint and permanent markers.

Fun Activities for Teens

- **Knitting or crochet-** Find a local knitting or crochet class to learn with a teen. Or find an online video and learn the skill together.
- **Music Time-** Pick relaxing and calming music and share with family. Add the music playlist to other activities as well such as a craft or while cooking together.
- **Outdoor activity-** Participate in the activity as a family allowing teens to lead or teach other family members.
- **Scavenger hunt-** Allow teens to create fun family scavenger hunt for everyone.
- **Obstacle Course-** Set up an obstacle course inside or outside, then have a family fun obstacle challenge, with teens taking the lead.
- **Family Trivia Night-** Create trivia questions and incorporate into to dinner table time or family fun game night, again letting teens take the lead.
- **Game/Video Game Night-** Have teens choose their favorite board game or video game and play as a family together.

Lets Make Dinner Together: Cheeseburger Cups

Ingredients Needed:

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon mustard
- 1-1/2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tube (12 ounces) refrigerated buttermilk biscuits
- 1/2 cup cubed Velveeta



Directions

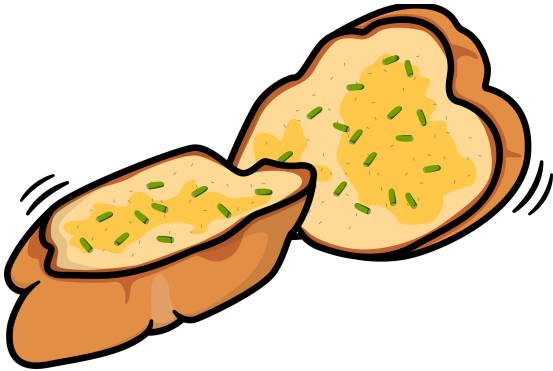
1. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat until no longer pink, breaking it into crumbles; drain. Stir in the ketchup, brown sugar, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Remove from the heat; set aside.
2. Press each biscuit onto the bottom and up the sides of a greased muffin cup.
3. Spoon beef mixture into cups; top with cheese cubes.
4. Bake at 400° for 14-16 minutes or until cups are golden brown.

Enjoy!

Lets Make Dinner Together: Garlic Bread Pizza Sandwiches

Ingredients Needed:

- 1 package (11-1/4 ounces) frozen garlic Texas toast
- 1/4 cup pasta sauce
- Shredded mozzarella cheese
- 8 slices thinly sliced hard salami
- Additional pasta sauce, warmed, optional



Directions

1. Preheat griddle over medium-low heat. Add garlic toast; cook until lightly browned, 3-4 minutes per side.
2. Spoon 1 tablespoon of sauce over each of 4 pieces of toast. Top with cheese, pepperoni, salami and remaining toast.
3. Cook until crisp and cheese is melted, 3-5 minutes, turning as necessary. If desired, serve with additional sauce.

Resources Available for Support



Were you affected by the **flooding** in Eastern Kentucky?

You are not alone. We are here for you.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN...

- Talking with someone
- Recognizing disaster reactions
- Building coping skills
- Managing stress

WE PROVIDE...

- Information
- Education
- Emotional support
- Links to resources

OUR SERVICES ARE...

- Confidential
- Anonymous
- Free
- In-person or virtual

& ARE AVAILABLE AT...

- School
- Meetings
- Workplace
- Places of worship



Project Recovery Kentucky is here to help individuals and communities recover from the effects of natural and human-caused disasters.

KENTUCKY RIVER COMMUNITY CARE

www.krcnet.com / 1-800-262-7491

Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 1-800-787-5043 (TTY)

Letcher, Leslie, Perry, Knott,
Breathitt, Owsley, Lee, Wolfe

MOUNTAIN COMPREHENSIVE CARE CENTER

www.mtcomp.org / 1-800-422-1060

Pike, Martin, Floyd, Magoffin, Johnson

WWW.PROJECTRECOVERYKY.COM

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Additional Resources Available for Support

- [NCTSN resource Tips for Families on Addressing the Anniversary](#)
- [Lifeline Children's Services](#)
- [Disaster Distress Helpline:](#)
 - 1-800-985-5990
- [Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: 988](#)
- [SAMHSA](#) (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services): Disaster Anniversaries
- [SAMHSA DTAC](#)
- [The Dougy Center](#)
- [Ready Gov](#)
- [Project Recovery Kentucky](#)

