

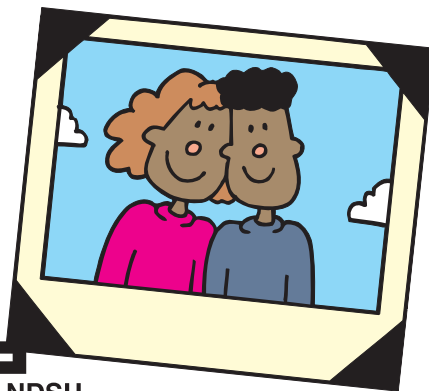
## A Shower of Emotions

Dealing with Moisture Stress

# Ideas for Helping Kids Deal with Stress

## Adults Can Help Kids Dealing with Stress

Parents and other adults play significant roles in helping children who are dealing with stress. They provide an example for children, act as a resource in helping children cope, and give guidance and support in managing emotions. Trying to return to a “normal” routine after moisture problems occur can be difficult since some of these problems may last for weeks or months. However, parents and other adults need to be attentive to children’s needs in helping them overcome fears or re-establish a sense of security. Parents tend to set the atmosphere that will help children cope or remain overly stressed.



North Dakota State University  
Fargo, North Dakota 58105

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## Ideas for Helping Children

There are a variety of strategies that parents or other adults can use in helping children deal with stress. These may include:

- **Hold the child and provide physical comfort.** Children may naturally seek the comfort and security that comes from being held. Give children extra hugs, smiles and hand-holding. Set aside time just to sit next to a child, put your arm around them, or hold them on your lap and talk with them about their feelings.
- **Give your child verbal reassurance.** It is important for children to hear messages of support. Remember to tell them often that you love them, that everything will work out and that they are taken care of.
- **Be honest with the child about your feelings.** It helps children to know that parents may share some of their feelings. Answer your child’s questions in a simple, straightforward way. Share your own thoughts and feelings as appropriate.
- **Ask your child to share his or her own thoughts and feelings. Listen.** Parents can help children by encouraging their expression of feelings and listening carefully to them. Ask them to tell you if they feel scared, angry or frustrated. Help them realize such feelings are normal and that they can be worked out. Ask them for their ideas on how they might help with family needs or service.
- **Read books together that involve dealing with challenges.** A very effective technique is to buy, check out or borrow books that show children or families dealing with challenges and overcoming them. These may be books about dealing with floods or other challenges. Ask children what they

think about the characters and how they respond. Compare your own situation. Read books several times or leave them out for children to look at.

- **Use humor to lighten circumstances.** Laugh. Laugh some more! Humor, smiles and laughter relieve tension, especially for children.
- **Have children write or tell a story or draw a picture about the family experience.** Children often express emotion and deal with stressful situations through play or expressive behavior. Ask children to tell you a story about the moisture problems, or help them write a story about it. Record this and read it back to them. You may also have children draw pictures about the experience. Ask them about the picture and what it means.
- **Provide materials for dramatic play related to the experience.** Often children will gain a sense of control over difficult situations through dramatic play. Make available props or materials they can use to play the roles of firefighters, doctors or nurses, construction workers, safety personnel or other helpers. Help facilitate such play as appropriate, and give children feedback about what they express.
- **Establish and maintain consistent routines that provide security and familiarity to children.** As much as possible, adults should create and maintain some routines that children can rely on for security. This might include a particular routine at lunch, nap time, dinner or bed time. It might involve reading stories each night, rough-and-tumble playing or playing family games. Use these times to build security and reassure children.
- **Help children express and cope with grief or feelings of loss.** Some children may have lost valued items or toys due to moisture damage. It is natural for them to feel a sense of loss. Allow children to express their loss or frustration, and acknowledge the reality of their feelings. Plan to replace a lost object if appropriate.

- **Develop a plan with children for action to take in case of future problems or stress.** Children feel empowered if they know beforehand what might be done to respond to a flood or other concern. This may include a home evacuation drill, knowledge of contact information for safety experts or simply greater understanding of potential weather-related concerns such as thunderstorms. Discuss such issues with children and involve them in making plans that will aid in responding to future challenges. Practice emergency procedures so children are familiar with them.
- **Involve children in clean-up or repair activities as appropriate.** It can be helpful to give children something to do in responding to stress. Children benefit from feeling that they are making a contribution. As possible, find an appropriate activity that children or youth can do to help clean up, repair or otherwise assist with responding to a stressful situation. Perhaps they can perform a service activity for others in need.
- **Show an example of self-control and positive response to stress.** Children learn how to respond to stress by watching adults. Adults ought to set an example of self-control, maturity and positive resolution in dealing with challenges. This will comfort children and create a secure atmosphere for them.

## Taking Action to Reduce Stress

Set aside time to specifically think about the conditions in your own family and what things you can do to help your children deal with stress. Make a plan and follow up on the activities. Share what you have done with others who may be facing challenges.

