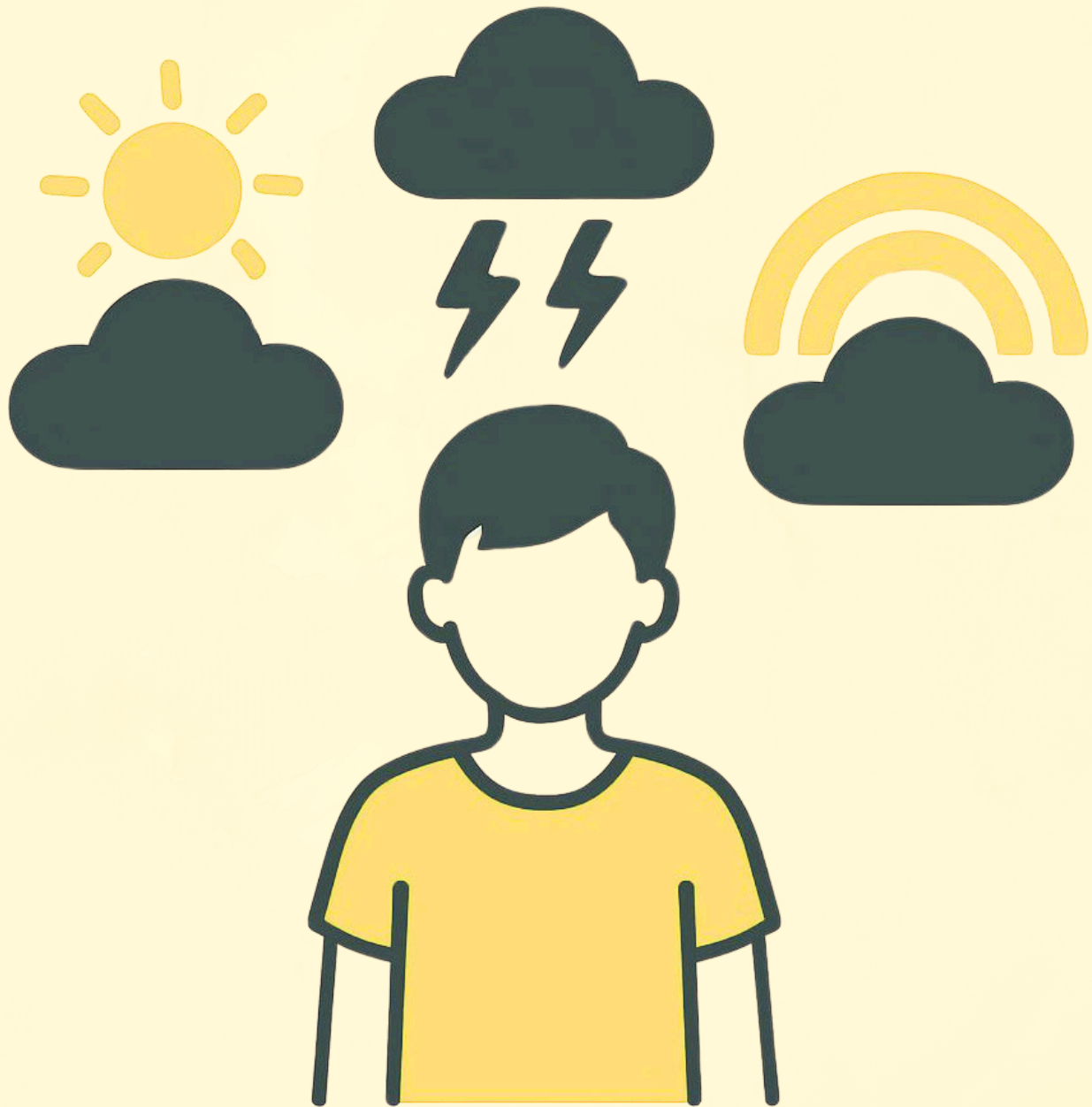




**NORMALCY & YOUTH
RECOVERY AFTER THE STORM**

CHAPTER 8

NORMALCY

& YOUTH RECOVERY AFTER THE STORM

Get back to normal.

After a hurricane, recovery is not only about power, repairs, and paperwork. Kids and teens also need routine, connection, trusted adults, and small reminders that life can feel normal again.

In this section:

-  Emotional check-ins after the storm
-  Returning to routines, school, activities, and friendships
-  Normalcy Kits and comfort items
-  Friend-to-friend support after disaster
-  When youth may need extra adult or professional support

READY TOGETHER MINDSET:

-  Kids recover better when they feel safe, seen, and supported.
-  Peer support is connection, not therapy.
-  Small normal routines can make a big difference.
-  If someone may be unsafe, involve a trusted adult immediately.



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

Preparedness helps families get through the storm. Normalcy and connection help kids find their way back afterward.

**This workbook supports preparedness and connection.
It does not replace mental health care or emergency services.**

Recovery Is Physical and Emotional

Repairs matter. So do routines, friendships, and feeling safe again.

After a disaster, everyone asks about damage: roofs, power, roads, water, and insurance. Those things matter. But for kids and teens, recovery also means getting back pieces of normal life: school, sports, friends, sleep, hobbies, and trusted adults who explain what is happening.

PHYSICAL RECOVERY MAY INCLUDE

- ☐ Checking the home for safe conditions
- ☐ Restoring power, water, and transportation
- ☐ Replacing supplies, medicine, or important items
- ☐ Documenting damage and contacting insurance
- ☐ Finding temporary housing, school, or transportation support

EMOTIONAL RECOVERY MAY INCLUDE

- ☐ Feeling safe enough to rest
- ☐ Restarting simple routines
- ☐ Talking to a trusted adult without pressure
- ☐ Reconnecting with friends and activities
- ☐ Knowing when to ask for extra help



CALM CHECK:

A child or teen may look “fine” and still feel stressed. A simple check-in can open the door without forcing them to talk.

If someone may be unsafe or overwhelmed, tell a trusted adult immediately

First Emotional Check-In

A short family conversation after the storm.

This page is not meant to solve everything. It is a way to pause, check on each other, and notice what each person needs next.

FAMILY CHECK-IN PROMPTS

ONE WORD FOR HOW I FEEL TODAY:

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ONE WORD FOR HOW I FEEL TODAY:

ADULT SUPPORT PROMPTS

WHO NEEDS REST?

WHO NEEDS FOOD/WATER/MEDICINE CHECKED?

WHO NEEDS A BREAK FROM STORM UPDATES?

WHO SHOULD WE CHECK ON OUTSIDE OUR HOME?

DO WE NEED SCHOOL, COUNSELOR, DOCTOR, OR COMMUNITY SUPPORT?

This page is a check-in tool, not a mental health assessment.

Returning to Routine

Small routines can help life feel less upside down.

After a storm, normal routines may be interrupted. Even if everything cannot go back to normal right away, small familiar things can help kids feel steadier.

RESTART SMALL ROUTINES

- ☐ Wake-up and bedtime rhythm
- ☐ Regular meals or snacks
- ☐ Schoolwork or reading time
- ☐ Movement, stretching, or practice time
- ☐ Quiet time away from storm coverage
- ☐ A small family check-in each day

NORMAL THINGS THAT MAY HELP

- ☐ Text or call a friend
- ☐ Wear a familiar hoodie or team shirt
- ☐ Listen to music or an audiobook
- ☐ Play cards, draw, journal, or build something
- ☐ Return to a sport, club, or hobby when safe
- ☐ Help with an age-appropriate task

MY ROUTINE STARTER PLAN

ONE MORNING ROUTINE I CAN RESTART: _____

ONE EVENING ROUTINE I CAN RESTART: _____

ONE ACTIVITY THAT HELPS ME FEEL LIKE MYSELF: _____

ONE PERSON I WANT TO RECONNECT WITH: _____

Small routines can support recovery, but they do not replace professional help when it is needed

School Disruption Plan

Keeping track when school is closed, moved, or delayed.

School can be a big part of normal life. If classes are delayed, online, relocated, or confusing after a storm, use this page to organize what comes next.

SCHOOL UPDATES

SCHOOL CLOSURE SOURCE: _____

SCHOOL PHONE/EMAIL: _____

TEACHER/ADVISOR CONTACT: _____

COUNSELOR/STUDENT SUPPORT CONTACT: _____

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE SOURCE: _____

WHAT I NEED FOR SCHOOL

DEVICE/CHARGER: _____

BOOKS/SUPPLIES/UNIFORMS: _____

ASSIGNMENTS TO CHECK: _____

TESTING/DEADLINE QUESTIONS: _____

A TEACHER/ADULT I CAN ASK FOR HELP: _____



SMALL WIN:

If school is disrupted, do not try to fix everything at once. Find one official update source and one adult to ask for help.

Follow school and local official guidance about closures, transportation, and reopening

Friend-to-Friend Support After Disaster

A simple check-in can help someone feel less alone.

Peer support is not about having the perfect words. It is about being kind, staying connected, and knowing when to involve a trusted adult.

Try saying	If they want to talk	If they need a break
"I'm glad you're safe."	Listen without interrupting.	Offer a distraction: music, cards, a walk, or homework
"Do you want to talk, or do you want a distraction?"	Do not force details.	Invite them to sit with you or join a normal activity.
"I don't know exactly what to say, but I'm here."	Validate without comparing.	Check in again later, not just once.

GOOD PEER SUPPORT CAN BE

- ☐ A text that says "thinking of you"
- ☐ Sharing notes if school was disrupted
- ☐ Including someone in lunch or a group chat
- ☐ Offering a normal activity without pressure
- ☐ Helping someone find a trusted adult

TELL AN ADULT RIGHT AWAY IF

- ☐ A friend says they feel unsafe
- ☐ They talk about not wanting to be alive
- ☐ They seem panicked, hopeless, or disconnected for a long time
- ☐ They are not eating, sleeping, or functioning in a concerning way
- ☐ You feel scared by what they told you

Peer support is connection, not therapy. If someone may be unsafe, tell a trusted adult immediately.

Normalcy Kit Checklist



KIDS4KIDS REMINDER:

A Normalcy Kit should feel thoughtful, not random. Whenever possible, match items to the child's age, interests, and real needs.

A small kit that helps a kid feel seen, supported, and remembered.

A Normalcy Kit is a personalized collection of comfort, activity, school, and hygiene items selected to help a child regain routine, connection, and a sense of normalcy after a disaster.

CORE ITEMS

- ☐ Book or age-appropriate reading item
- ☐ Journal or notebook
- ☐ Pens, pencils, or art supplies
- ☐ Small game, puzzle, cards, or activity
- ☐ Hygiene items if appropriate
- ☐ School supplies if needed

PERSONAL COMFORT ITEMS

- ☐ Comfort note or encouragement card
- ☐ Sports item, team item, or hobby item
- ☐ Headphones, playlist card, or quiet activity idea
- ☐ Small toy or stuffed item for younger kids
- ☐ Gift card if appropriate and approved
- ☐ Item based on age, interests, and family situation

Normalcy Kits are not just about “stuff.” The goal is to give kids something familiar, useful, or personal when life feels disrupted.

Create a Normalcy Kit

Plan one kit with care before collecting items.

Step	Action	Done
1	Ask partner/adult what items are allowed.	☐
2	Choose age-appropriate items.	☐
3	Pack items neatly and respectfully.	☐
4	Add a kind note without making promises.	☐
5	Track kit count and delivery partner.	☐

WHO IS THIS KIT FOR?

AGE RANGE: _____

INTERESTS/HOBBIES: _____

SCHOOL NEEDS: _____

COMFORT OR QUIET ACTIVITY NEEDS: _____

ANY RESTRICTIONS OR ITEMS TO AVOID: _____

WHAT WILL WE INCLUDE?

USEFUL ITEM: _____

COMFORT ITEM: _____

ACTIVITY ITEM: _____

SCHOOL/HYGIENE ITEM: _____

ENCOURAGEMENT NOTE: _____



PRO TIP:

Avoid writing "I know exactly how you feel." A better note is: "I'm thinking of you and hoping this helps your day feel a little easier."

Student volunteers should work with a trusted adult or partner organization for collection and distribution.

Youth Volunteer Boundaries

Helping others should not mean carrying everything alone.

Student leaders can do meaningful work after a disaster, but they still need boundaries, rest, and adult support. Helping should feel purposeful, not overwhelming.

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS CAN:

- ☐ Collect and sort approved supplies
- ☐ Pack Normalcy Kits
- ☐ Share official resources
- ☐ Check in kindly with peers
- ☐ Invite someone into a normal activity
- ☐ Tell a trusted adult when they are worried

STUDENT VOLUNTEERS SHOULD NOT:

- ☐ Act as therapists or crisis counselors
- ☐ Promise to keep unsafe secrets
- ☐ Pressure anyone to share disaster stories
- ☐ Make emergency or medical decisions
- ☐ Drive or enter unsafe areas
- ☐ Ignore their own stress or exhaustion



CALM CHECK:

If helping starts to feel heavy, pause and talk to an adult advisor. Strong leaders also know when to rest.

If someone may be unsafe, tell a trusted adult or emergency service immediately

Trauma-Informed Language

Words can either help someone feel safe or make them feel smaller.

You do not need perfect words. You just need words that are kind, calm, and respectful.
The goal is to support, not fix.

Avoid saying	Try saying instead
“At least it was not worse.”	“I’m really sorry you had to go through that.”
“Everything happens for a reason.”	“That sounds really hard. I’m here with you.”
“You should be over it by now.”	“It makes sense that recovery takes time.”
“I know exactly how you feel.”	“I may not know exactly how it felt, but I care.”
“Don’t be dramatic.”	“Do you want to talk, or would a break help?”



PEER SUPPORT MOMENT

Sometimes support sounds simple: “I’m here,” “I believe you,” “You don’t have to talk if you don’t want to,” or “Let’s find an adult who can help.”

Peer support is not therapy. It is kindness, connection, and knowing when to get help.

Supporting Younger Kids After the Storm

Younger kids often need simple words, routine, and reassurance.

YOUNGER KIDS MAY NEED

- ☐ Simple explanations without scary details
- ☐ Reassurance that adults are handling safety decisions
- ☐ Comfort items, play, drawing, or stories
- ☐ Predictable routines when possible
- ☐ Breaks from news, images, and adult stress talk
- ☐ Patience if behavior changes for a while

HELPFUL ADULT OR SIBLING ACTIONS

- ☐ Answer questions honestly but gently
- ☐ Keep meals, bedtime, and school routines as steady as possible
- ☐ Offer choices: "Do you want to draw or read?"
- ☐ Use calm words: "We have a plan."
- ☐ Let play or drawing become a way to express feelings
- ☐ Get professional help if reactions are severe or do not improve

FOR THE YOUNGER KID IN OUR FAMILY/COMMUNITY

COMFORT ITEM: _____

FAVORITE CALM ACTIVITY: _____

TRUSTED ADULT: _____

ROUTINE TO RESTART FIRST: _____

If a child seems unsafe, severely distressed, or is not improving, contact a trusted professional

Supporting Teens After the Storm

Teens may need responsibility, space, and support — in the right balance.

TEENS MAY APPRECIATE

- ☐ Clear information about the family plan
- ☐ A real but safe way to help
- ☐ Time with friends or teammates
- ☐ Space without being ignored
- ☐ Help catching up with school or activities
- ☐ Adults who do not minimize their stress

BE CAREFUL NOT TO

- ☐ Make teens the emotional “adult” of the family
- ☐ Assume they are fine because they are quiet
- ☐ Expect them to process everything immediately
- ☐ Let doom-scrolling replace rest
- ☐ Ignore sleep, appetite, panic, or withdrawal changes
- ☐ Let them carry a friend’s crisis alone



PARENT/GUARDIAN TIP:

A teen may not want a long conversation. Try a low-pressure opening: “I’m here if you want to talk, and I can also just sit with you.”

Peer support is not therapy. It is kindness, connection, and knowing when to get help.

Sleep, Focus, and Body Stress

Stress can show up in the body, not just in words.

After a storm, kids and teens may not always say “I’m stressed.” It may show up as sleep problems, headaches, stomachaches, trouble focusing, irritability, withdrawal, or wanting to stay near trusted adults.

NOTICE CHANGES LIKE

- ☐ Ongoing nightmares or sleep problems
- ☐ Big changes in eating or energy
- ☐ Headaches, stomachaches, or body tension
- ☐ Trouble focusing or remembering things
- ☐ Irritability, panic, or sudden strong emotions
- ☐ Withdrawal from friends or usual activities

SUPPORTIVE NEXT STEPS

- ☐ Restart simple routines when possible
- ☐ Reduce repeated storm images and rumors
- ☐ Offer food, water, rest, and calm activities
- ☐ Talk to a trusted adult, counselor, doctor, or pediatrician
- ☐ Use 988 or emergency help if there is immediate safety concern
- ☐ Do not ignore severe or worsening reactions



CALM CHECK:

Stress reactions are not weakness. They are signals that a person may need support, rest, connection, or professional help.

How to Ask for Help

Sometimes the hardest part is starting the sentence.

Asking for help can feel awkward, especially when everyone seems busy after a storm. Use one of these lines if you are not sure what to say.

If you feel...	Try saying...
Overwhelmed	"I am feeling overwhelmed and need to talk to someone."
Scared	"I know we have a plan, but I still feel scared. Can you explain what happens next?"
Confused	"Can you help me understand what our family is doing today?"
Worried about a friend	"I'm worried about my friend and I don't want to handle it alone."
Not safe	"I do not feel safe. I need help now."

MY HELP PLAN:

TRUSTED ADULT AT HOME:

TRUSTED ADULT AT SCHOOL:

COACH/MENTOR/FAMILY FRIEND:

DOCTOR/COUNSELOR:

WHAT I CAN SAY IF I NEED HELP:

If there is immediate danger, call 911. For crisis support, call or text 988.

National Crisis & Support Resources



PRO TIP:

QR codes are helpful before a storm, but phones and power may fail. Write down important numbers and websites, too.

Write down support options before you need them.

These resources are for the United States and U.S. territories. Add local school, counselor, doctor, and community resources in the blanks.

U.S. CRISIS & SUPPORT RESOURCES

Emergency danger:

Immediate danger

911

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:

Emotional crisis or support

Call or text 988

SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline:

Call or text 1-800-985-5990

Poison Control

Poison exposure or possible poisoning

1-800-222-1222

READY TOGETHER RESOURCE HUB:



kids4kidsrelief.org/ready

LOCAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

SCHOOL COUNSELOR/SUPPORT:

PEDIATRICIAN/DOCTOR:

LOCAL MENTAL HEALTH PROVIDER:

COMMUNITY/YOUTH ORGANIZATION:

FAITH/COMMUNITY LEADER, IF HELPFUL:

TRUSTED ADULT WHO CAN HELP US CHOOSE NEXT STEPS:

If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911.

For suicide or emotional-crisis support, call or text 988.

Recovery Reflection



SMALL WIN:

Reflection is part of preparedness. What you learn after one storm can make your family and community stronger before the next one.

What helped, what changed, and what we want to remember next time.

This page can be filled out by a student, family, or Ready Together group. It is okay if your answers are short. The goal is to notice what helped and what still needs support.

WHAT HELPED US RECOVER?

ONE THING THAT HELPED ME FEEL SAFER:

ONE PERSON WHO SUPPORTED ME:

ONE ROUTINE THAT HELPED:

ONE ITEM OR ACTIVITY THAT BROUGHT COMFORT:

ONE THING I AM PROUD OUR FAMILY DID:

WHAT SHOULD WE DO NEXT TIME?

ONE THING WE SHOULD PREPARE EARLIER:

ONE ITEM WE SHOULD ADD TO OUR KIT:

ONE CONTACT/RESOURCE WE SHOULD UPDATE:

ONE WAY WE CAN SUPPORT ANOTHER FAMILY OR FRIEND:

ONE QUESTION WE STILL HAVE:

Preparedness is built one step at a time. Recovery is, too.