

How to talk with you child before, during, and after the storm.

It is important the children feel prepared without feeling overwhelmed. Talking with your child and involving your child in the preparations can help ease their fears.

Communication is key. If your child seems worried or upset, be sure to ask them how they are feeling. They may not understand what is happening, but they are aware that adults around them may be nervous or anxious. Explain what a hurricane is, and let them know that there could be a lot of rain and wind, and that there could be a loss of power. Do not share details that could be frightening for a child, such as “all of the roads and homes may be flooded,” or “a tree could fall on our house.” Instead, let them know that you are making preparations to help keep them safe.

Include them in the preparations. Share how your family is preparing and include them in completion of tasks. Have them check flashlights to see if they work, assist with grocery shopping, or make plans for keeping their pet safe. Also have them make a list of things they can do if the power goes out. While making preparations, make sure you are talking with your child about why preparations are important in staying safe during the storm.

Monitor access to the news and social media. While it is important for adults to be informed so they can make decisions regarding safety, too much exposure to the news or to conversations in social media can be overwhelming for a young person. Limit their exposure before, during, and after the storm, and make sure you are checking in with them regarding their feelings about what they are seeing or hearing on the news. A child may hear the phrase “This is going to be a monster storm,” and because they do not understand the context, they may believe that there will be monsters that come during the storm. Talking with your child will help them process the information and can help alleviate misplaced fears.

Acknowledge their feelings. Assure your child it is OK to be scared or afraid, but at the same time reassure them that you are doing everything you can to prepare. It is OK as the adult to be honest and say that you are nervous too, but do not overshare your fears. It is important that your child see you as calm, even though you may feel anxious or afraid.

Continue to communicate

Even after the storm, it is important that you continue to check in with your child and have them share what they are feeling. The sounds associated with heavy winds and rain can be scary for a child as well as adults. Validate their feelings, and let them know that you thought it was scary too. If there is damage to your living space or if there is flooding in your area, reassure your child that they are safe and let them know the next steps. Reassure them that you are working to make things right, and that in the meantime they are safe.

Monitor your child for changes in behavior, sleep patterns, or eating habits. Changes in behavior could mean that they are anxious or afraid after the storm. Continue to encourage your child to share their feelings, and reassure them that they are safe. As much as possible, maintain your normal structure and routine even after the storm.

Once your child returns to school, student services staff will be prepared to support your child as needed.