

Disasters and Youth

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3 Youth's Reactions to Disasters and the Factors That Influence Their Response

By Betty Pfefferbaum, M.D., J.D., J. Brian Houston, Ph.D., Carol S. North, M.D., M.P.E., and James L. Regens, Ph.D.

A number of factors can contribute to youth's reactions to disasters. These factors can include characteristics of the event; the nature of the youth's exposure; and individual, family, and social predictors. This article describes both outcomes and predictors in order to prepare professionals who may work with youth in post-disaster situations.



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7 Supporting Adolescents Exposed to Disasters

By Anne K. Jacobs, Ph.D., Eric Vernberg, Ph.D., and Stephanie J. Lee

When supporting adolescents who have experienced a disaster, whether natural or man-made, there are certain considerations that need to be taken into account. This article describes common adolescent reactions to the impact phase of disasters as well as short-term and long-term adaptation. Additionally, information about how best to prepare adolescents and their families for possible disasters is offered.



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11 A School-Based Mental Health Service Model for Youth Exposed to Disasters: Project Fleur-de-lis

By Douglas W. Walker, Ph.D.

Project Fleur-de-lis was designed only days after Hurricane Katrina to address the intermediate and long-term mental health issues of students as they re-entered school. This article describes the creation, design, impact, and "lessons learned" of this innovative school-based mental health system.



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14 Experiencing Disasters Indirectly: How Traditional and New Media Disaster Coverage Impacts Youth

By J. Brian Houston, Ph.D., Betty Pfefferbaum, M.D., J.D., and Gilbert Reyes, Ph.D.

This article provides a review of what is known about how disaster coverage in traditional media (e.g., newspapers, television) and in new media (e.g., Internet, cell phones) impacts children and adolescents who indirectly experience a disaster.



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18 Posttraumatic Growth in Youth Following Disasters

By Ryan P. Kilmer, Ph.D., and Virginia Gil-Rivas, Ph.D.

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) refers to positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with major loss or trauma. This article seeks to provide relevant background regarding posttraumatic growth, distinguish it from resilience, and explore ways to facilitate growth in youth following disasters.

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From the Editor's PC

Dear Colleagues,

Disasters, whether natural or human-caused, are problematic because they not only affect individuals but whole communities, often overwhelming the infrastructure needed for response. At the same time, they are often unpredictable, taking a community by surprise. Therefore, advance readiness is essential. As stated by Ann Jacobs and colleagues in this issue, "Taking action to support youth in the event of a disaster begins long before the onset of crisis."

Our goal for this issue on "Disasters and Youth" is to help adults who work with youth put the necessary systems into place to facilitate successful adaptation as well as assist those youth who need more services. Setting the groundwork, our first article by Dr. Betty Pfefferbaum and colleagues, examines the outcomes associated with exposure to disasters and the factors that may influence young people's responses. Building on this, Dr. Anne Jacobs and colleagues articulate important ways to prepare and support adolescents during the different phases of a major disaster—both during and after the event.

The author of our third article, Dr. Douglas Walker, developed Project Fleur-de-lis. This project is an innovative school-based mental health system designed to address the intermediate and long-term mental health issues of students as they re-entered school following Hurricane Katrina. In his article, Dr. Walker describes the program and some of the lessons learned.

Research has shown that there is an association between indirect disaster exposure (such as watching it on television) and adverse emotional reactions in young people. While the impact of the Internet and other "new" media disaster coverage has yet to be researched, our fourth article by Dr. J. Brian Houston and colleagues, combines what is known about the impact of traditional media coverage with the structure of the Internet and other new media, and provides recommendations for clinicians and parents.

Finally, our fifth article explores the concept of posttraumatic growth, which refers to positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with trauma. Drs. Ryan Kilmer and Virginia Gil-Rivas, explore this new concept and consider how those who work with youth can facilitate growth following a disaster.

All the best,

Steven Ungerleider, Ph.D.
Editor/Psychologist

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