



Supporting Children and Young People impacted by the Earthquake in Syria/Turkey Advice for Parents/Guardians

Hearing about natural disasters like the earthquake in Turkey and Syria, or wildfires or other weather events has become more commonplace and frequent. This news can cause different reactions and emotions in us all as we feel for the people who might be hurt, have lost relatives and their homes and their communities.

Your child may be affected more than others if:

- You and your family are of Syrian or Turkish heritage
- You are seeking protection in Ireland
- If you and your children have recently experienced separation and loss
- If your child has additional needs
- If your child experiences anxiety in relation to climate change

The support of trusted adults in your child's life will support them to feel safe and secure and to manage their thoughts and feelings at this time.

You can help support your child in the following ways:

- **Model a sense of calm** – Children and young people look to the adults in their lives to show them how to deal with worrying and stressful events. If the adults in a child or young person's life are overly worried, their anxiety may rise. In the same way, when adults are calm it helps to reduce children and young people's stress and anxiety. Be careful about what you say if talking to other



adults about the earthquake in the company of your child.

- **Look after your own wellbeing** – Remember you are an important support to your child at this time. Pay attention to your own wellbeing and how you are feeling and take steps to manage your own self-care. See supports and resources available from the HSE and community support services [here](#).
- **Maintain routines** – While you may be worried and waiting for news of loved ones you can support your child to maintain everyday routines and engage in activities that they enjoy as this can help to reduce some stress/ anxiety.
- **Give information in reassuring ways** – Children and young people will have different understandings of what is going on. They need factual, age appropriate information. While not minimising the terrible losses try also to focus on the rescue efforts of the rescue workers. You can explain to them that earthquakes are more likely in certain parts of the world. Let their questions and their age guide what information is provided and how.
 - **Very young children** need brief, simple information and reassurance. Let them know that they are safe and if possible that the people they care about are safe. Reassure them that the rescue workers are doing their best to help.
 - **Older children** may need help to separate reality from rumour and fantasy. Having the facts can help them feel a sense of control. They may also be concerned with their mortality,



fairness and moral and/or ethical issues. Give them space and opportunity to discuss theses in a supportive and safe way.

- **Limit media exposure** – Limit what they see and hear on the news. Images and reporting of earthquakes can be upsetting and frightening.
- **Foster a sense of control** – Encourage your child to think about small ways they might help: e.g. supporting fundraising appeals.
- **Remember listening is a response** – Do not dismiss your child's concerns, let them express their fears and worries. Allow them to use Art activities and with younger children remember play can help them to express their worries.
- **Monitor your child** – Watch for signs of distress or anxiety e.g. clinginess or attention seeking behaviour, change in eating/sleeping habits. If these persist for longer than you would expect seek professional help.

For further advice on supporting children and young people, click on the links below.

- [Wellbeing Advice and Resources – gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie)
- [Your Mental Health – HSE and community support services](#)
- [Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing – Mental Health Ireland](#)
- [Mental Health and Wellbeing - HSE.ie](#)