

Introduction

The earthquake will result in a range of reactions and questions from students depending on their experience of the event and their dispositions

- Anxiety, fear of reoccurrence of the event
- Some behaviours may revert to behaviours of younger children such as thumb sucking, bed wetting, etc
- Wondering what will happen next
- Concerns about being separated from their parents and whānau.

Typically most students will be coping with what they have experienced – but they will still have questions, want to talk about it, and hear from others. Students will be looking to adults to provide a sense of safety and security. Adults can help students by also returning a sense of routine and normalcy to their lives. Students who experience high levels of social support from parents, friends and teachers have been found to cope well.

Helpful approaches:

- Provide assurance that all reactions are normal
- Provide opportunities to keep routines going as much as possible and highlight what is and can be done to get things back to normal
- Emphasise how people have coped and what's being done - at a government, council and community level, at a school level and family and neighbours - buildings and homes have been damaged and that makes people sad but we have all done well (this is a great topic for discussion outlining what went well)
- Focus on how things will be in the future.

Things to do:

- The school day should start how it always starts. Ensure important information is conveyed when students are with their teachers and peer groups they know and trust
- Ensure teachers have key and accurate information to share with students – what property damage did or did not occur and if teachers aren't at school why not
- If there are changes in routine explain clearly what these changes are and why they are occurring
- Students will want to talk about what has happened to them and what they saw. Teachers can support these conversations through discussions, drawings, story telling etc, and by ensuring the positive aspects of events are emphasised
- If students have lost possessions or things that are important to them, acknowledge this loss and speak about things that they can do to replace or work towards replacing these things – ask for suggestions
- In case of after shocks, rehearse earthquake drills – make this a reassurance activity, we know what to do and emphasise that drills keep everyone safe
- Give opportunity for students to tell their stories – again try and get some focus on how well families and community have managed.

Tips

The following support tips are included in this document:

- [Tips On Supporting Toddlers](#)
- [Tips On Supporting Children](#)
- [Tips On Supporting Young People](#)
- [Tips On Supporting Adults](#)

Tips On Supporting Toddlers

Notes on using these tips: Use and share with parents and teachers to help support toddlers affected by a traumatic incident.

Source: Psychological First Aid Operations Guide, 2006.

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Has problems sleeping, doesn't want to go to bed, won't sleep alone and wakes up at night screaming.	When children are scared they want to be with people who help them feel safe and they worry when you are not together. If you were separated during the disaster, going to bed alone may remind your child of that separation. Bedtime is a time for remembering because we are not busy doing other things. People often dream about things they fear and can be scared of going to sleep.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you want, let your child sleep with you. Let her know this is just for now. Have a bedtime routine such as a story, a prayer, cuddle time. Tell her the routine (every day), so she knows what to expect. Hold her and tell her that she is safe, that you are there and will not leave. Understand that she is not being difficult on purpose. This may take time, but when she feels safer, she will sleep better.
Worries something bad will happen to you. (You may also have worries like this.)	Children who cannot yet speak or say how they feel may show their fear by clinging or crying. Goodbyes may remind your child of any separation you had related to the disaster. Children's bodies react to separations (stomach sinks, heart beats faster). Something inside says: 'Oh no, I can't lose her'. Your children are not trying to manipulate or control you. They are scared. They may also get scared when other people (not just you) leave. Goodbyes make them scared.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try to stay with your child and avoid separations right now. For brief separations (store, bathroom) help your child by naming his feelings and linking them to what he has been through. • Let him know you love them and that this goodbye is different, you'll be back soon. 'You're so scared. You don't want me to go because last time we weren't together you didn't know where I was. This is different and I'll be right back'. • For longer separations have them stay with familiar people, tell them where you are going, why and when you will come back. Let them know you will think about them. Leave a photo or something of yours and call if you can. When you come back, tell them you missed them, thought about them and did come back. You will need to say this over and over.
Has problems eating, eats too much or refuses food.	Stress affects your child in different ways, including their appetite. Eating healthy is important but focusing too much on eating can cause stress and tension in your relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relax. Usually, as your child's level of stress goes down, their eating habits will return to normal. Don't force your child to eat. Eat together and make meal times fun and relaxing. Keep healthy snacks around. Young children often eat on the go. If you are worried, or if your child loses a significant amount of weight, consult a pediatrician.
Is not able to do things she used to do (like use the potty) or does not talk like she used to.	Often when young children are stressed or scared, they temporarily lose abilities or skills they recently learned. This is the way young children tell us that they are not okay and need our help. Losing an ability after children have gained it (like starting to wet the bed again) can make them feel ashamed or embarrassed. Caregivers should be understanding and supportive. Your child is not doing this on purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid criticism. It makes them worried that they'll never learn. Do not force your child. It creates a power struggle. Instead of focusing on the ability (like not using the potty), help your child feel understood, accepted, loved and supported. As your child feels safer, she will recover the ability lost.
Is reckless, does dangerous things.	It may seem strange, but when children feel unsafe, they often behave in unsafe ways. It is one way of saying: 'I need you. Show me I'm important by keeping me safe'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep them safe. Calmly go and get them and hold them if necessary. Let them know that what they are doing is unsafe, that they are important and you wouldn't want anything to happen to them. Show them other more positive ways they can have your attention.
Scared by things that did not scare them before.	Young children believe their parents are all-powerful and can protect them from anything. This belief helps them feel safe. Because of what happened, this belief has been damaged and without it the world is a scarier place. Many things may remind your child of the disaster (falling objects, aftershocks, ambulances, people yelling, a scared look on your face) and will scare him. It is not your fault – it was the disaster.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When your child is scared, talk to him about how you will keep him safe. If things remind your child of the disaster and cause him to worry that it is happening again, help him understand how what is happening now (like aftershocks, or something dropping) is different from the disaster. If he talks about monsters, join him in chasing them out. 'Go away monster. Don't bother my baby. I'm going to tell the monster boo and it will get scared and go away. Boo, boo'. Your child is too young to understand and recognise how you did protect them, but remind yourself of the good things you did.



Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Seems hyper, can't sit still, and doesn't pay attention to anything.	Fear can create nervous energy that stays in our bodies. Adults sometimes pace when worried. Young children run, jump and fidget. When our minds are stuck on bad things, it is hard to pay attention to other things. Some children are naturally active.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help your child to recognise her feelings (fear, worry) and reassure your child that she is safe. Help your child get rid of nervous energy: stretching, running, sports, breathing deep and slow. Sit with her and do an activity you both enjoy, throw a ball, read books, play, draw. Even if she won't stop running around, this helps. If your child is naturally active, focus on the positive. Think of all the energy she has to get things done and find activities that suit her needs.
Plays in a violent way. Keeps talking about the disaster and the bad things they saw.	Young children often talk through play. Violent play can be their way of telling us how crazy things were or are and how they feel inside. When your child talks about what happened, strong feelings may come up both for you and your child (fear, sadness, anger).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you can tolerate it, listen to your child when they talk. As your child plays, notice the feelings he has and help him by naming feelings and being there to support him (hold and soothe him). If he gets overly upset, spaces out or plays out the same upsetting scene, help him calm down, feel safe and consider getting professional help.
Now very demanding and controlling. Seems stubborn insisting that things be done their way.	Between the age of 18 months to three years, young children often seem clingy or controlling. It can be annoying, but it is a normal part of growing up and helps them learn that they are important and can make things happen. When children feel unsafe, they may become more clingy and controlling than usual. This is one way of dealing with fears. They are saying: 'Things are so crazy I need control over something'.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember your child is not clingy, controlling or bad. This is normal, but may be worse right now because they feel unsafe. Let your child have control over small things. Give children choices over what they wear or eat, games you play, stories you read. If they have control over small things, it can make them feel better. Balance giving them choices and control with giving them structure and routines. They will feel unsafe if they run the show. Cheer them on as they try new things. They can also feel more in control when they can put their shoes on, put a puzzle together, pour juice.
Tantrums and is cranky. Yells a lot more than usual.	Even before the disaster, your child may have had tantrums. They are a normal part of being little. It's frustrating when you can't do things and when you don't have the words to say what you want or need. Now, your child has a lot to be upset about (just like you) and may really need to cry and yell.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let them know you understand how hard this is for them. 'Things are really bad right now. It's been so scary. We don't have your toys or TV and you're mad'. Tolerate tantrums more than you usually would and respond with love rather than discipline. You might not normally do this, but things are not normal. If they cry or yell, stay with them and let them know you are there for them. Reasonable limits should be set if tantrums become frequent or are extreme.
Hits you.	For children, hitting is a way of expressing anger. When children can hit adults they feel unsafe. It's scary to be able to hit someone who's supposed to protect you. Hitting can also come from seeing other people hit each other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each time your child hits, let her know that this is not OK. Hold her hands, so she can't hit, have her sit down. Say something like: 'It's not OK to hit, it's not safe. When you hit, you are going to need to sit down'. If she is not old enough, give her the words to use or tell her what they need to do. Say: 'Use your words. Say I want that toy'. Help them express anger in other ways, ie, play, talk and draw. If you are having conflict with other adults, try to work it out in private, away from where your child can see or hear you. If needed, talk with a friend or professional about your feelings.
Says: 'Go away, I hate you!' Says: 'This is all your fault.'	The real problem is the earthquake and everything that followed, but your child is too little to fully understand that. When things go wrong, young children often get mad at their parents because they believe they should have stopped it from happening. You are not to blame, but now is not the time to defend yourself. Your child needs you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember what your child has been through. They don't mean everything they say: 'They're angry and dealing with so many difficult feelings.' Support your child's feeling of anger, but gently redirect the anger towards the earthquake. 'You are really mad. Lots of bad things have happened. I'm mad too. I really wish it didn't happen, but even mums can't make earthquakes not happen. It's so hard for both of us.'
Doesn't want to play or do anything. Seems to not really have any feelings (happy or sad).	Your child needs you. So much has happened and they may be feeling sad and overwhelmed. When children are stressed, some yell and others shut down. Both need their loved ones.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit by your child and keep her close. Let her know you care. If you can, give words to her feelings. Let her know it's OK to feel sad, mad or worried. 'It seems like you don't want to do anything. I wonder if you are sad. It's OK to be sad. I will stay with you'. Try to do things with your child, anything she might like, ie, read a book, sing and play together.



Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Cries a lot.	Your family/whānau may have experienced difficult changes because of the incident and it is natural that your child is sad. When you let your child feel sad and provide them with comfort, you help your child even if they remain sad. If you have strong feelings of sadness, it may be good for you to get support. Your child's well-being is connected to your well-being.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow your child to express feelings of sadness. Help your child name his feelings and understand why he may feel that way. 'I think you're sad. A lot of hard things have happened'. Support your child by sitting with him and giving him extra attention. Spend special time together. Help your child feel hopeful about the future. It will be important to think and talk about how your lives will continue and the good things you will do, like go for a short walk, cook together, reading stories, playing ball games, make believe and or playing with friends. Take care of yourself.
Misses people you are no longer able to see after the traumatic incident.	Even though young children do not always express how they feel, be aware that it is difficult for them when they lose contact with important people. If someone close to your child is injured, your child may show stronger reactions to the earthquake. If the reactions appear to be strong and to last longer than two weeks, it may be helpful to seek help from a professional.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For those that have moved away, help your child stay in touch in some way (for example, sending pictures or cards, calling). ● Help your child talk about these important people. Say: 'Even when we are apart from people, we can still have positive feelings about them by remembering and talking about them.' Acknowledge how hard it is when we can't visit and see people as often as we would like.
Misses things you have lost because of the earthquake.	When an earthquake brings so much loss to a family/whānau and community, it is easy to lose sight of how much the loss of a toy or other important item (blanket) can mean to a child. Grieving for a toy is also your child's way of grieving for all you had before the earthquake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow your child to express feelings of sadness. It is sad that your child lost their toy or blanket. If possible, try to find something that would replace the toy or blanket that would be acceptable and satisfying to your child. Distract your child with other activities.
Helplessness and passivity. Young children know they can't protect themselves. In an earthquake they feel even more helpless. They want to know their parents will keep them safe. They might express this by being unusually quiet or agitated.	Provide comfort, rest, food, water and opportunities for play and drawing. Provide ways to turn spontaneous drawing or playing from the earthquake to include something that would make them feel safer or better. Reassure your child that you and other grownups will protect them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give your child more hugs, hand-holding or time in your lap. Make sure there is a special safe area for your child to play, with proper supervision. In play, a four- year-old keeps having the blocks knocked down by the earthquake. Asked: 'Can you make it safe from the earthquake?' the child quickly builds a double block thick wall and says: 'The earthquake won't get us now'. A parent might respond with: 'That wall sure is strong' and explain: 'We're doing a lot of things to keep us safe'.
General clinginess/fearfulness. Young children may become more afraid of being alone, being in the bathroom, going to sleep or otherwise separated from parents. Children want to believe that their parents can protect them in all situations and that other grownups such as teachers or police officers, are there to help them.	Be as calm as you can with your child. Try not to voice your own fears in front of your child. Help children regain confidence that you aren't leaving them and that you can protect them. Remind them that there are people working to keep families/whānau safe and that your family/whānau can get more help if you need to. If you leave, reassure your children you will be back. Tell them a realistic time in words they understand and be back on time. Give your child ways to communicate their fears to you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be aware when you are on the phone or talking to others, that your child does not overhear you expressing fear. ● Say things such as: 'We are safe from the earthquake now and people are working hard to make sure we are okay'. ● Say: 'If you start feeling more scared, come and take my hand. Then I'll know you need to tell me something'.
Confusion about the danger being over: Young children can overhear things from adults and older children or see things on TV or just imagine that it is happening all over again. They believe the danger is closer to home, even if it happened further away.	Give simple, repeated explanations as needed, even every day. Make sure they understand the words you are using. Find out what other words or explanations they have heard and clarify inaccuracies. If you are at some distance from the danger, it is important to tell your child that the danger is not near you.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Continue to explain to your child that the earthquake tremors will stop soon and that you there will not be another large quake. But things may continue to fall down for a while. Draw, or show where you are is safe. 'See? The earthquake did this here and we're way over here in this safe place'.
Not talking. Being silent or having difficulty saying what is bothering them.	Put common feelings of children into words such as anger, sadness and worry about the safety of parents, friends and siblings. Do not force them to talk, but let them know they can talk to you any time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Draw simple, happy faces for different feelings on paper plates. Tell a brief story about each one such as: 'Remember when the water or the bricks came into the house and had a worried face like this?' Say something like: 'Children can feel really sad when their home is damaged'. Provide art or play materials to help them express themselves. Then use feeling words to check out how they felt. 'This is a really scary picture. Were you scared when you saw the water or the bricks?'

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Fears the earthquake will return. When having reminders seeing, hearing or otherwise sensing something that reminds them of the earthquake.	Explain the difference between the earthquake and the tremors. Protect children from things that will remind them as best you can.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Even though the earth is shaking again, that doesn’t mean the earthquake is happening again. A tremor or shake is smaller and can’t wreck stuff like an earthquake can.’ Keep your child from seeing television, radio and computer images of the earthquake that can trigger fears of it happening again.
Sleep problems. Fear of being alone at night, sleeping alone, waking up afraid, having bad dreams.	Reassure your child that they are safe. Spend extra quiet time together at bedtime. Let the child sleep with a dim light on or sleep with you for a limited time. Some might understand an explanation of the difference between dreams and real life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide calming activities before bedtime. Tell a favourite story with a comforting theme. At bedtime say: ‘You can sleep with us tonight, but tomorrow you’ll sleep in your own bed. Bad dreams come from our thoughts inside about being scared, not from real things happening’.
Returning to earlier behaviours, eg, thumb-sucking, bedwetting, baby-talk, needing to be in your lap.	Remain neutral or matter-of-fact, as best you can, as these may continue a while after the earthquake.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your child starts bedwetting, change his clothes and linens without comment. Don’t let anyone criticise or shame the child by saying: ‘You’re such a baby’.
Not understanding about loss. Early childhood-age children may not understand that losing things or having things damaged cannot be replaced immediately. The loss might be missed greatly such as a favourite toy. The loss of a pet may be very hard on a child.	Give age-appropriate consistent explanation that does not give false hopes about regaining their possessions. Don’t minimise their feelings over a loss of a precious toys or pets. Take cues from what your child seems to want to know. Answer simply and ask if they have any more questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow children to participate in cultural and religious rituals. Help them find their own way to say goodbye by drawing a happy memory or lighting a candle or saying a prayer for them. ‘No, Pepper won’t be back, but we can think about him and talk about Pepper and remember what a silly doggy he was. The fire-fighter said no one could save Pepper and it wasn’t your fault. I know you miss him very much’.

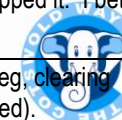


Tips On Supporting Children

Notes on using these tips: Use and share with parents and teachers to help support children affected by a traumatic incident.

Source: Psychological First Aid Operations Guide, 2006.

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Confusion about what happened.	Give clear explanations of what happened whenever your child asks. Avoid details that would scare your child. Correct any information that your child is unclear or confused about present danger. Remind children that there are people working to keep families/whānau safe and that your family/whānau can get more help if needed. Let your children know what they can expect to happen next.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'I know other kids said that more earthquakes are coming, but we are experiencing tremors and another big earthquake is highly unlikely and we are now safer from earthquakes.' • Continue to answer questions your children have (without getting irritable) to reassure them the family/whānau is safe. • Tell them what's happening, especially about issues regarding school and where they will be living.
Feelings of being responsible. School-aged children may have concerns that they were somehow at fault or should have been able to change what happened. They may hesitate to voice their concerns in front of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities for children to voice their concerns to you. • Offer reassurance and tell them why it was not their fault. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take your child aside. Say: 'After an earthquake like this, lots of kids and parents too keep thinking 'What could I have done differently?' or 'I should have been able to do something?' That doesn't mean they were at fault'. I think we need to take a break from the TV right now'.
Fears of recurrence of the earthquake and reactions to reminders such as the tremors and things falling down.	Help children to identify reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and to clarify the difference between the earthquake and the reminders that occur after it. Reassure them, as often as they need, that they are safe. Protect children from seeing media coverage of the earthquake as it can trigger fears of it happening again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When they recognise that they are being reminded, say: 'Try to think to yourself, 'I am upset because I am being reminded of the earthquake because it is shaking or raining, but now there is no earthquake and I am safe'. I think we need to take a break from the TV right now'.
Re-telling the event or playing out the earthquake over and over.	Permit children to talk and act out these reactions. Let them know that this is normal. Encourage positive problem-solving in play or drawing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'I notice you're drawing a lot of pictures of what happened. Did you know that many children do that? It might help to draw about how you would like your school to be rebuilt to make it safer'.
Fear of being overwhelmed by their feelings.	Provide a safe place for them to express their fears, anger, sadness, etc. Allow children to cry or be sad. Don't expect them to be brave or tough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'When scary things happen, people have strong feelings like being mad at everyone or being very sad. Would you like to sit here with a blanket until you're feeling better?'
Sleep problems including bad dreams, fear of sleeping alone, demanding to sleep with parents.	Let your child tell you about the bad dream. Explain that bad dreams are normal and they will go away. Do not ask the child to go into too many details of the bad dream. Temporary sleeping arrangements are okay; make a plan with your child to return to normal sleeping habits.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'That was a scary dream. Let's think about some good things you can dream about and I'll rub your back until you fall asleep. You can stay in our bedroom for the next couple of nights. Then we will spend more time with you in your bed before you go to sleep. If you get scared again, we can talk about it'.
Concerns about the safety of themselves and others.	Help them to share their worries and give them realistic information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a worry box where children can write out their worries and place them in the box. Set a time to look these over, problem-solve and come up with answers to the worries.
Altered behaviour. Unusually aggressive or restless.	Encourage the child to engage in recreational activities and exercise as an outlet for feelings and frustration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I know you didn't mean to slam that door. It must be hard to feel so angry. How about we take a walk? Sometimes getting our bodies moving helps with strong feelings'.
Somatic complaints, ie, headaches, stomach aches, muscle aches for which there seem to be no reason.	Find out if there is a medical reason. If not, provide comfort and assurance that this is normal. Be matter-of-fact with your child. Giving non-medical complaints too much attention may increase them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the child gets enough sleep, eats well, drinks plenty of water and gets enough exercise. • Say: 'How about sitting over there? When you feel better, let me know and we can play cards'.
Closely watching a parent's responses and recovery. Not wanting to disturb a parent with their own worries.	Give children opportunities to talk about their feelings as well as your own. Remain as calm as you can, so as not to increase your child's worries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Yes, my ankle is sprained, or cut, but it feels better since the doctor wrapped it. I bet it was scary seeing me hurt, wasn't it?'
Concern for other victims and families/whānau.	Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not burden with undue responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help children identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful (eg, clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need).



Tips On Supporting Young People

Notes on using these tips: Use and share with parents and teachers to help support young people affected by a traumatic incident.

Source: Psychological First Aid Operations Guide, 2006.

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
Wanting to be alone, feeling guilty or shamed about how they reacted.	Provide a safe time to discuss with your teen the events and their feelings. Emphasise that these feelings are common, and correct excessive self-blame with realistic explanations of what actually could have been done.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'Many kids and adults feel like you do, angry and blaming themselves that they couldn't do more.' • Say: 'You're not at fault. Remember, the fireman who came to help us said there was nothing we could have done differently and aren't we lucky that everyone is safe'.
Self-consciousness about their fears, sense of vulnerability, afraid of some things or going outside, fear of being labelled abnormal.	Help teens understand that these feelings are common. Encourage relationships with family/whānau and peers for needed support during the recovery period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'I was feeling the same thing. Scared and helpless. Most people feel like this when an earthquake happens, even if they look calm on the outside.' • 'My mobile phone is working again, why don't you see if you can get hold of Pete to see how he's doing. And thanks for playing the game with your little sister. She's much better now'.
Acting out behaviour. Using alcohol, driving recklessly and other accident-prone behaviour.	Help teens understand that acting out behaviour is a dangerous way to express strong feelings (like anger) over what happened. Limit access to alcohol. Talk about the danger of high-risk activity. Have them let you know where they are going and what they're planning to do.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'Many teens and some adults feel out of control and angry after an earthquake like this. They think drinking will help somehow. It's very normal to feel that way, but it's not a good idea to act on it. It's important during these times that I know where you are and how to contact you'. Assure your teen that this extra checking in is temporary, just until things have stabilised.
Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders.	Help to identify different reminders (people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day) and to clarify the difference between the event and the reminders and images on phones, web sites etc. that occur after it. Explain to teens that pictures and images of the earthquake can trigger fears of it happening again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Say: 'When you're reminded, you might try saying to yourself, 'I am upset now because I am being reminded, but it is different now because there is no earthquake and I am safe'. Watching the news reports could make it worse, because they are playing the same images over and over. How about turning it off now?'
Abrupt shifts in interpersonal relationships. Teens may pull away from parents, family/whānau and even from peers. They may respond strongly to parent's reactions in the crisis.	Explain that the strain on relationships is expectable. Emphasise that we need family/whānau and friends for support during the recovery period. Encourage tolerance for different family/whānau members' reactions and ways of recovering. Accept responsibility for your own feelings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend more time talking as a family/whānau about how everyone is doing. Say: 'You know, the fact that we're crabby with each other is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling things amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other'. You might say: 'I appreciate your being calm when your brother was screaming last night. I know he woke you up too. I want to apologise for being irritable with you yesterday. I am going to work harder to stay calm myself.'
Radical changes in attitude.	Explain that changes in people's attitudes after an earthquake are common, but will return to normal over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'We are all under great stress. When people's lives are disrupted this way, we all feel more scared, angry and, even, full of revenge. It might not seem like it, but we all will feel better when we get back to a more structured routine'.
Wanting premature entrance into adulthood (eg, wanting to leave school, get married).	Encourage postponing major life decisions. Find other ways to make the adolescent feel more in control over things.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I know you're thinking about quitting school and getting a job to help out. But it's important not to make big decisions right now. A crisis time is not a great time to make major changes'.
Concern for other victims and families/whānau.	Encourage constructive activities on behalf of others, but do not burden with undue responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help teens to identify projects that are age-appropriate and meaningful (eg, clearing rubble from school grounds, collecting money or supplies for those in need).



Tips On Supporting Adults

Notes on using these tips: Use and share with parents and teachers to help support adults affected by a traumatic incident.

Source: Psychological First Aid Operations Guide, 2006.

Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
High anxiety/arousal. Tension and anxiety are common after an earthquake. Adults may be excessively worried about the future, have difficulties sleeping, problems concentrating and feel jumpy and nervous. These reactions can include rapid heart beat and sweating.	Use breathing and/or other relaxation skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take time during the day to calm yourself through relaxation exercises to make it easier to sleep, concentrate and give you energy. Try a breathing exercise as follows: inhale slowly through your nose and comfortably fill your lungs all the way down to your stomach, while saying to yourself: 'My body is filled with calmness.' Exhale slowly through your mouth and comfortably empty your lungs, while silently saying to yourself: 'My body is releasing the tension.' Do this five times slowly and as many times a day as needed.
Concern or shame over your own reactions. Many people have strong reactions after an earthquake, including fear and anxiety, difficulty concentrating, shame over how you reacted and feeling guilty about something. It is expected and understandable to feel many things in the aftermath of an event such as an earthquake.	Find a good time to discuss your reactions with a family/whānau member or trusted friend. Remember that these reactions are common and it takes time for them to subside. Correct excessive self-blame with realistic assessment of what actually could have been done.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When talking with someone, find the right time and place and ask if it is okay to talk about your feelings. Remind yourself that your feelings are expected and you are not going crazy and that you are not at fault for the disaster. If these feelings persist for a month or more you may wish to seek professional help.
Feeling overwhelmed by tasks that need to be accomplished (eg, housing, food, paperwork for insurance, cleaning up, washing, child care, parenting).	Identify what your top priorities are. Find out what services are available to help get your needs met. Make a plan that breaks down the tasks into manageable steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a list of your concerns and decide what to tackle first. Take it one step at a time. Find out which agencies can help with your needs and how to access them. Where appropriate, rely on your family/whānau, friends and community for practical assistance.
Fears of recurrence and reactions to reminders. It is common for survivors to fear that another big earthquake will occur and to react to things that are reminders of what happened.	Be aware that reminders can include people, places, sounds, smells, feelings, time of day. Remember that media coverage of the earthquake can be a reminder and keep triggering fears.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When you are reminded, try saying to yourself: 'I am upset because I am being reminded of the earthquake, but it is different now because the tremors are smaller and I am safe now.' Monitor and limit your viewing of news reports so you just get the information that you need.
Changes in attitude, view of the world and of oneself. Strong changes in people's attitudes after an earthquake are common. These can include questioning one's spiritual beliefs, trust in others and social agencies and concerns about one's own effectiveness and dedication to helping others.	Postpone any major unnecessary life changes in the immediate future. Remember that dealing with post-earthquake difficulties increases your sense of courage and effectiveness. Get involved with community recovery efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that getting back to a more structured routine can help improve decision-making. Remind yourself that going through an earthquake can have positive effects on what you value and how you spend your time. Consider engaging in community recovery projects.
Using alcohol and drugs, or engaging in gambling or high-risk sexual behaviours. Many people feel out of control, scared, hopeless or angry after an incident and engage in these behaviours to feel better. This can especially be a problem if there was pre-existing substance abuse or addiction.	Understand that using substances and engaging in addictive behaviours can be a dangerous way to cope with what happened. Get information about local support agencies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember that substance use and other addictive behaviours can lead to problems with sleep, relationships, jobs and physical health. Get appropriate help.



Concern/issue	Understand	Tips
<p>Shifts in interpersonal relationships. People may feel differently towards family/whānau and friends, eg, they may feel overprotective and very concerned for each other's safety, frustrated by the reactions of a family/whānau member or friend or they may feel like pulling away from family/whānau and friends.</p>	<p>Understand that family and friends are a major form of support during the recovery period. It is important to understand and tolerate different ways that people respond and recover from the effects of earthquakes among family/whānau members. Rely on other family/whānau members for help with parenting or other daily activities when you are upset or under stress.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't withdraw from seeking support just because you feel you might burden someone else. Most people do better after earthquakes with good support from others. Don't be afraid to ask your friends and family/whānau how they are doing, rather than just giving advice or trying to get them to get over it. Let them know you understand and offer a supportive ear or lend a helping hand. Spend more time talking with family/whānau and friends about how everyone is doing. Say: 'You know, the fact that we're grumpy with each other is completely normal, given what we've been through. I think we're handling this amazingly. It's a good thing we have each other'.
<p>Excessive anger. Some degree of anger is understandable and expected after an earthquake, especially when something feels unfair. However, when it leads to violent behaviour, extreme anger is a serious problem.</p>	<p>Find ways to manage your anger in a way that helps you rather than hurts you.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage your behaviour by taking time to cool down, walk away from stressful situations, talk to a friend about what is making you angry, get involved in physical exercise, distract yourself with positive activities or problem-solve the situation that is making you angry. Remind yourself that being angry will not get you what you want and may harm important relationships. If you become violent, get immediate help.
<p>Sleep difficulties. Sleep problems are common after an earthquake, as people are on edge and worried about their safety, possessions, house and future life changes. This can make it more difficult to fall asleep and lead to frequent awakenings during the night.</p>	<p>Make sure you have good sleep routines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a task list of things that you all need to achieve together. Make sure this list is realistic and agreed by members of your family. Try to go to sleep at the same time every day. Don't drink caffeinated beverages in the evening. Reduce alcohol consumption. Increase daytime exercise. Relax before bedtime. Limit daytime naps to 15 minutes and do not nap later than 4pm.

