



# “RESILIENCE IN OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES”

RESOURCE BOOKLET

**A Guide for Recovery After Tropical Storm Helene**

 **Hope4NC Helpline**  
Call: 1-855-587-3463

 **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**  
Call or Text: 988  
Chat: [988lifeline.org/chat](https://988lifeline.org/chat)

 **SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline**  
Call or Text: 1-800-985-5990

## RESOURCE BOOKLET

### *“Resilience in Our Schools and Communities”*

#### *Western North Carolina*

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**Title:**

**Resilience in Our Schools & Communities**

*A Toolkit for Healing, Coping, and Moving Forward After Tropical Storm Helene*

**For:**

- K–12 Educators, Staff & Faculty
  - Higher Education Staff & Faculty
  - School Counselors & Nurses
  - Parents & Caregivers
  - Students (K–12 & College)
  - Community Members
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The views, opinions, and/or findings expressed should not be interpreted as representing the official views or policies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services or the U.S. Government.

Finally, we thank the educators, school staff, families, and communities of Western North Carolina. Your resilience and dedication in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Helene continue to inspire this work. This resource is offered in support of your ongoing healing, connection, and recovery.

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## SECTION 1 — ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This booklet was created for **schools, families, and communities in Western North Carolina** recovering from Tropical Storm Helene.

This guide is meant to be practical, easy to share, and accessible to people of all ages and backgrounds.

You can use this booklet to:

- Understand stress responses
- Learn practical, trauma-responsive tools to support students, adults, and families
- Practice grounding, coping, and emotional regulation techniques
- Strengthen the connection between schools and homes
- Access local, state, and federal behavioral health resources
- Reference worksheets you can print and share
- Build individual and community resilience
- Support long-term healing, connection, and recovery

There is **no wrong way** to use this booklet.

Flip through, explore, and return to what feels helpful.

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## SECTION 2 — UNDERSTANDING STRESS RESPONSES

*(This section is for ALL audiences — students, families, educators.)*

After a Disaster, everyone responds differently.

### **Early Stress Reactions After a Disaster**

Following a disruptive event like Tropical Storm Helene, both adults and children may experience early stress responses. These reactions are common and often temporary.

Common early stress responses include:

- Feeling “on edge”
- Trouble sleeping or restlessness
- Difficulty concentrating
- Increased irritability or emotional swings
- Startle responses or increased sensitivity to noise
- Feeling disconnected or “numb”
- Difficulty maintaining routines

- Overthinking or worry

These reactions typically lessen with time, structure, connection, and support. If reactions persist or intensify, additional help may be needed.

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### **How Children & Teens May Respond**

Kids and teens often communicate stress through behaviors, not words.

#### **Young Children (Pre-K – Grade 5)**

- Clinginess
- Nightmares or trouble sleeping
- Meltdowns, tantrums, or big emotions
- Regressions (bedwetting, thumb sucking)
- New fears or worries
- Sensory sensitivity

#### **Middle School**

- Irritability
- Withdrawal
- Changes in appetite
- Increased worries or stomachaches/headaches
- Fatigue
- Increased conflict
- School avoidance, lower motivation, or dips in performance
- Act “too grown” or “too young” for their age

#### **How High School, College & Young Adults May Respond**

- Difficulty concentrating
- Hopelessness
- Emotional numbness
- Changes in appetite
- Sadness or anger
- Sleep disruption
- Risk-taking behaviors
- Increased isolation

## **Understanding Educator and Caregiver Stress**

Many educators & caregivers experience:

- Compassion fatigue
- Decision fatigue
- Role overload
- Guilt for being unable to “do enough”
- Emotional spillover from students’ stories
- Pressure to stay positive despite stress

This is **normal** and deserving of care.

### **Compassion Fatigue**

Compassion fatigue can occur when educators and school staff are repeatedly exposed to the stress or trauma of others. This is sometimes called secondary trauma or vicarious trauma. High stress, workplace pressure, limited rest, and limited social support can contribute to feeling this way. It is a normal human response. Common symptoms include:

- Emotional exhaustion
- Decreased empathy or feeling “numb”
- Mood swings or irritability
- Difficulty concentrating
- Negative thoughts or self-blame
- Feeling disconnected from others
- Physical symptoms such as headaches or tension
- Changes in worldview or increased pessimism
- Hopelessness

### **Signs Someone May Need Additional Support (ALL AGES)**

- Persistent sadness or withdrawal
- Excessive fear or panic
- Loss of interest in activities
- Dramatic changes in behavior
- Comments about hopelessness
- Decline in functioning at school/work
- Substance use increases

**Important:** Healing happens gradually, and support helps.

Encourage reaching out for support from school counselors, behavioral health providers, primary care, or crisis resources if needed.

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### **Positive Signs of Recovery**

- Engaging with routines
- Reconnecting with friends
- Asking for help
- Showing interest in activities again
- Increased moments of calm
- Enjoying simple pleasures

Recovery is not linear — ups and downs are normal.

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## **SECTION 3 — CORE TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE STRATEGIES FOR ALL AGES**

These strategies help adults respond to stress-related behaviors with patience, clarity, and emotional safety.

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### **Core Trauma-Responsive Practices (For All Ages)**

- Speak calmly and slowly
- Offer choices
- Validate feelings
- Avoid shaming or blaming
- Use predictable routines
- Prepare youth for transitions
- Allow movement breaks
- Limit overwhelming sensory input (lights, noise)
- Focus on safety, not punishment

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### **For Use In Classrooms (Educators)**

- Use visual schedules and predictable routines
- Provide calm corners or regulation spaces
- Normalize asking for breaks
- Teach grounding methods openly
- Reinforce “behavior as communication”
- Notice signs of distress early

- Provide short, simple directions
  - Build daily check-ins
- 

### **For Use In Homes (Families & Caregivers)**

- Maintain routine sleep, meals, and transitions
  - Encourage talking, drawing, or play for emotional expression
  - Use family grounding breaks
  - Validate feelings: “It’s okay to feel this way.”
  - Create a quiet “cool down zone”
  - Reassure children with presence, not perfection
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### **Understanding the “Window of Tolerance”**

Black, P., Henderson-Smith, L., & Flinspach, S. (2021, September 21). *Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit*. National Center for School Safety.

<https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit/>

Resources for Resilience™ <https://resourcesforresilience.org/>

The **Window of Tolerance** (also called the **Resilient Zone** in other models including Resources for Resilience™) describes the range in which a person feels calm enough and alert enough to learn, communicate, and manage emotions. After stressful or traumatic events, it is easier to fall outside this window.

**Window of Tolerance**  
**Trauma/Anxiety Related Responses**  
*Widening the Comfort Zone for Increased Flexibility*

**HYPER-AROUSSED**  
 Fight/Flight Response

- ANXIETY
- OVERWHELMED
- CHAOTIC RESPONSES
- OUTBURSTS (EMOTIONAL OR AGGRESSIVE)
- ANGER/AGGRESSION/RAGE
- RIGIDNESS
- OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR OR THOUGHTS
- OVER-EATING/RESTRICTING
- ADDICTIONS
- IMPULSIVITY

**CAUSES TO GO OUT OF THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**

- **Fear of...** Unconscious Thought & Bodily Feeling; Control, Unsafe, I do not exist, Abandonment, Rejection
- **Trauma-Related Core Beliefs about self are triggered:** Emotional & Physiological Dysregulation occurs



**TO STAY IN THE WINDOW OF TOLERANCE**

- Mindfulness: Being Present, in Here-n-Now
- Grounding Exercises
- Techniques for Self-Soothing, Calming the Body & Emotional Regulation
- Deep, Slow Breathing
- Recognize Limiting Beliefs, Counter with Positive Statements About Self, New Choices

Freeze Response  
**HYPO-AROUSSED**

- FEIGN DEATH RESPONSE
- DISSOCIATION
- NOT PRESENT
- UNAVAILABLE/SHUT DOWN
- MEMORY LOSS
- DISCONNECTED
- AUTO PILOT
- NO DISPLAY OF EMOTIONS/FLAT
- SEPARATION FROM SELF, FEELINGS & EMOTIONS

Source: Dezelic, M. S. (2013). Window of Tolerance- Trauma/Anxiety Related Responses: Widening the Comfort Zone for Increase Flexibility. Retrieved December 19, 2020 from <https://www.drmariedezelec.com/window-of-tolerance--traumaanxiety-rela>

Retrieved 12/01/2025 from <https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit/>

**Inside the Window of Tolerance:**

- Able to listen
- Able to follow directions
- Able to manage emotions
- Able to engage socially
- Able to focus on learning
- Able to complete tasks

**Outside the Window of Tolerance:**

<p><b>Hyper-arousal (Too “High”)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May look agitated or jumpy</li> <li>• May appear angry or irritable</li> <li>• May have trouble sitting still</li> <li>• May feel overwhelmed</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on learning:</b> difficulty focusing, following directions, or regulating emotions.</p>	<p><b>Hypo-arousal (Too “Low”)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May appear shut down</li> <li>• May withdraw from others</li> <li>• May show low energy or “flat” affect</li> <li>• May seem disconnected</li> </ul> <p><b>Impact on learning:</b> difficulty participating, paying attention, or processing new information.</p>
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## Why this matters

A person outside their Window of Tolerance is not “misbehaving” — their nervous system is overwhelmed.

Educators and caregivers can help by:

- Offering grounding tools
- Providing choices
- Keeping routines consistent
- Using calm tone and body language
- Allowing movement or sensory breaks
- Reducing sensory overload
- Validating feelings
- Creating predictable environments

Understanding this framework helps educators and caregivers respond with compassion and effective strategies.

**Important Note:** Just as students have a Window of Tolerance, educators and caregivers do too. Supporting educator well-being is an essential part of supporting students.

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## SECTION 4 — SUPPORTING CHILDREN, TEENS, & YOUNG ADULTS

Recovery looks different for each person. Families, educators, and community members play a vital role in helping people heal. Here are strategies for how you can help.

### **How to Support Young Children:**

#### **1. Rebuild Predictable Routines**

Routines restore a sense of safety.

#### **2. Talk Honestly But Gently**

Use simple language:

“You’re safe now. We’re taking things one step at a time.”

#### **3. Listen More Than You Talk**

Children may express feelings through actions, not words.

#### **4. Offer Comforting Presence**

Attention and consistency help children regulate.

## **5. Use Family-Friendly Coping Tools**

Head Start & Sesame Street Emotional Regulation Tools (Hybrid Resource Reference) - See [Appendix B](#) & [Appendix K](#)

## **6. Watch for Signs They Need More Help**

Persistent decline in mood, functioning, or safety concerns means it's time for additional support.

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### **How to Support Teens & Young Adults:**

#### **1. Keep Routines Predictable**

People feel safer when routines are consistent.

Consistency = safety

#### **2. Offer Low-Pressure Connection**

Ask open, simple questions:

- “How’s your heart today?”
- “What’s been the hardest part of your day?”

People behave better when they feel seen.

#### **3. Validate Emotions**

Try not to take irritability personally. Say:

- “You’re allowed to feel that.”
- “I’m here with you.”

Avoid:

- “Calm down.”
- “You’re overreacting.”

Instead of “Don’t worry,” try:

- “It makes sense you feel that way.”
- “I’m listening.”

#### **4. Encourage expression**

Children → drawing, play, storytelling

Teens → journaling, music

Older youth → trusted - small-group conversation, movement, peer support

#### **5. Teach self-regulation**

Encourage sleep, movement, and sunlight

Provide calm, nonjudgmental support

Use the grounding tools from [Appendix B](#) and [Appendix C](#), especially:

- Slow Belly Breathing / Diaphragmatic Breathing
- Mindful Check-in
- 5-4-3-2-1
- Movement breaks

### **6. Watch for Signs They Need More Help**

Persistent decline in mood, functioning, or safety concerns means it's time for additional support.

### **Creating a Calm Space for Children, Teens and Adults**

Suggested items:

- Comfortable chair or pillow
- Soft lighting
- Breathing cards
- Calming jar or timer
- Books or coloring materials
- Sensory tools (fabric, textures)
- Plants or nature images

Guidelines for using the space:

- Anyone can use it
- No punishment or shame
- Use it to calm down
- Leave when ready

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## **SECTION 5 — EDUCATOR, SCHOOL STAFF, & CAREGIVER WELL-BEING**

Educators, administrators, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, custodians, resource officers, and all school personnel have carried enormous emotional responsibility in the months following Tropical Storm Helene.

You play a powerful role in community recovery. Caring for yourself strengthens your ability to care for others.

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## **Well-Being Strategies for Staff**

### **1. Two-Minute Micro-Breaks**

- Slow breathing
- Look out a window
- Drink water
- Move/stretch
- Grounding technique

### **2. Set Gentle Boundaries**

- “I do not check email after \_\_\_ PM.”
- “I take 5 calm minutes before students arrive.”

Small boundaries prevent burnout.

### **3. Build Peer Support**

Use the **Brainstorming Rotation** to gather staff ideas on (*From the Group Activities list*):

- Quick self-care strategies
- Morning or evening routines
- Healthy boundary-setting
- Ways to recharge
- Joy-building activities

### **4. Use Digital Wellness Tools** (See [Appendix K](#))

### **5. Create “Calm Areas” for Staff Rooms**

#### **Suggested items:**

- Soft lighting
- Quiet chair
- Grounding cards
- Plants or nature images
- Water
- Inspirational quotes

A calm space supports collective well-being.

#### **Brief Grounding Exercise for Educators**

This quick grounding practice can help during stressful moments:

Hold an object and notice its texture and temperature (30 seconds)

Describe the object in detail (30 seconds)

Focus on your feet on the floor, noticing the contact and support (30 seconds)

Simple grounding breaks can help restore calm and reduce emotional overload.

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### **Supportive Reminders for School Leaders**

Leaders can protect staff well-being by:

- Normalizing asking for help
- Avoiding unnecessary last-minute requests
- Checking in: “How can I support you today?”
- Creating staff wellness committees
- Celebrating small wins
- Modeling boundaries and self-care

### **Caregiver Well-Being**

Caregivers are more effective when their own needs are recognized.

Suggestions:

- Connect with another adult daily
- Practice micro-breaks
- Use stress-management apps
- Seek help when overwhelmed

### **What Helps with Compassion Fatigue**

- Acknowledge your feelings without judgment
  - Take small wellness breaks during the day
  - Use grounding tools (see Section 4)
  - Talk with a trusted colleague
  - Set gentle boundaries
  - Participate in staff wellness activities
  - Engage in restful or joyful activities outside of work
  - Seek additional support if feelings persist or worsen
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## **SECTION 6 — COMMUNITY, STATE, NATIONAL, & FEDERAL RESOURCES**

### **A. Local & Western North Carolina Resources**

#### **WNC Community Health Services (WNCCHS)**

Behavioral health, primary care, and family support.

828-285-0622 [Behavioral Health — Western North Carolina Community Health Services](https://www.wncchs.org/behavioral-health)  
(<https://www.wncchs.org/behavioral-health>)

### **Resources for Resilience (WNC)**

Established in 2017, Resources for Resilience is a western North Carolina–based nonprofit offering professional development workshops for educators at all levels. Their trainings provide practical, research-based tools to support staff wellness and burnout prevention, along with strategies that can be used with students of all ages who are experiencing stress or trauma. FREE workshops are available through June 2026; visit <https://resourcesforresilience.org/events/> to register.

828-367-7092 [Youth & Family Programs](https://resourcesforresilience.org/youth-family-programs/) (https://resourcesforresilience.org/youth-family-programs/)

### **B. Statewide North Carolina Resources**

#### **NC Center for Resilience & Learning**

School-based trauma-responsive, resilience building practices and support for students and staff.

[What We Do - NC Center for Resilience & Learning](https://resilienceandlearning.org/what-we-do/) (https://resilienceandlearning.org/what-we-do/)

#### **NC Department of Health & Human Services**

Statewide physical and behavioral health support. 800-662-7030

[NCDHHS mental health services](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/mental-health-services) (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/mental-health-services)

**NCDHHS [Hope4NC](https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/hope4nc-helpline-1-855-587-3463)** (https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/mental-health-developmental-disabilities-and-substance-use-services/hope4nc-helpline-1-855-587-3463) links hurricane survivors with resources that assist in recovery and rebuilding, helps with disaster preparedness, and offers emotional and educational support. Hope4NC Helpline: 1-855-587-3463.

#### **NCDHHS [Division of Child Development and Early Education \(DCDEE\)](https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Provider/Emergency-Preparedness-and-Response/Disaster-Recovery)**

(https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Provider/Emergency-Preparedness-and-Response/Disaster-Recovery) Disaster Recovery Webpage for childcare providers.

#### **Resilient North Carolina (Resilient NC)**

Trauma response and resilience building best practices.

[A Plan for North Carolina | Resilient NC](https://resilientnorthcarolina.org/a-plan-for-north-carolina/) (https://resilientnorthcarolina.org/a-plan-for-north-carolina/) This website contains an extensive list of (linked) disaster and trauma related resources.

**North Carolina Department of Public Instruction** – recommendations for equitable access to high quality and well-coordinated mental health and substance abuse services. [School Mental Health Policy and Support](https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/programs-and-initiatives/nc-healthy-schools/school-mental-health-policy) (https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/classroom-resources/academic-standards/programs-and-initiatives/nc-healthy-schools/school-mental-health-policy)

### **NC Center for Safe & Supportive Schools**

School safety tools, including training and support for Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management (BTAM) and mental health initiatives, ensuring schools are equipped to identify and address potential threats while fostering a culture of care and resilience. [NCBSI.GOV](https://www.ncsbi.gov/Services/School-Safety) (https://www.ncsbi.gov/Services/School-Safety)

### **North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center**

The NC Resource Center’s mission is to promote healthy and safe indoor and outdoor environments in early care and education settings through childcare health consultation. The NC Resource Center provides:

- Health and safety training and technical assistance to early educators
- Professional development opportunities, resources, and current best practices around health and safety in childcare.
- Guidance and connection to local, regional, and state-wide child health and childcare partners focusing on current health and safety priorities.
- Qualification, ongoing professional support, and coaching for Child Care Health Consultants.

This website contains [Post-Disaster Guidance and Resource Lists](https://healthychildcare.unc.edu/resources/reference/immediate-post-disaster-resources/) (https://healthychildcare.unc.edu/resources/reference/immediate-post-disaster-resources/)

## **C. National Resources**

**National Center for School Safety** – Several resources aimed at providing schools with the tools and strategies needed to prevent violence and create safe, supportive learning environments.

- [Training and Resources for Mental Support](https://www.nc2s.org/trainings-resources/?_topic_areas=mental-health) (https://www.nc2s.org/trainings-resources/?\_topic\_areas=mental-health)
- [Returning to School After a Crisis](https://www.nc2s.org/resource/returning-to-school-after-a-crisis-a-guide-to-addressing-traumatic-events-at-school/) ( https://www.nc2s.org/resource/returning-to-school-after-a-crisis-a-guide-to-addressing-traumatic-events-at-school/)
- [Setting up a Supportive Physical Environment \(Training Slides\)](https://www.nc2s.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TR-Schools-2-Tool-Physical-Environment.pptx) (https://www.nc2s.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TR-Schools-2-Tool-Physical-Environment.pptx)

- [Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented \(TR\) Schools Toolkit](https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit/) (https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit/) - a framework for implementing trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approaches in any school or school district. Addresses support of both students and educators.

**Psychological First Aid (PFA) Training** - PFA is an approach to help after disasters, designed to reduce initial distress and foster adaptive functioning.

- Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center: [Psychological First Aid for Schools](https://rems.ed.gov/K12PFAS.aspx?) (https://rems.ed.gov/K12PFAS.aspx?)
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Psychological First Aid: [Psychological First Aid \(PFA\) Online | The National Child Traumatic Stress Network](https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-online) (https://www.nctsn.org/resources/psychological-first-aid-pfa-online)

**The Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) -**

- [A Toolkit for Supporting the Implementation of School Employee Wellness in Districts/Schools](https://elearn.sophe.org/school-employee-wellness) (https://elearn.sophe.org/school-employee-wellness)

**HOPE Animal-Assisted Crisis Response (AACR):**

- [HOPE AACR](https://www.hopeaacr.org/) (https://www.hopeaacr.org/) gives Comfort in Times of Crisis by providing emotional support with specially-trained canine and handler teams.
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## **D. Federal Resources (Credible & Public Facing)**

### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) For Educators**

- [How to Talk About Mental Health - Educators](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/educators) (https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/educators)

### **For Parents & Caregivers**

- [How to Talk About Mental Health - Parents and Caregivers of Children](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/parents-and-caregivers) (https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/parents-and-caregivers)
- [Mental Health Coping Resources for Children and Families](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/children-and-families/coping-resources) (https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/children-and-families/coping-resources)

### **For Teens & Young Adults**

- [For Young People Looking for Help](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/young-people) (https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/how-to-talk/young-people)

### **Administration for Children and Families (ACF)**

- [Behavioral Health Resources for Teens and Young Adults](https://acf.gov/behavioral-health/teens-and-young-adults)  
(<https://acf.gov/behavioral-health/teens-and-young-adults>)

### **National Institutes of Mental Health (NIMH)**

- [Helping Kids and Teens Cope With Traumatic Events](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events)  
(<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-disasters-and-other-traumatic-events>)
- [Understanding stress](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet) (<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet>)

### **U.S. Department of Education**

- [Improving school climate to help educators identify key areas to focus on to create safe and supportive climates in their schools.](https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/safe-learning-environments/school-safety-and-security/school-climate-and-student-discipline/school-climate) (<https://www.ed.gov/teaching-and-administration/safe-learning-environments/school-safety-and-security/school-climate-and-student-discipline/school-climate>)
- [Building Student Resilience Toolkit](https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/building-student-resilience-toolkit) (<https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/building-student-resilience-toolkit>)
- [Understanding Educator Resilience and Developing a Self-Care Plan](https://rems.ed.gov/webinar/detail?id=16)  
(<https://rems.ed.gov/webinar/detail?id=16>) - webinar

### **Centers for Disease Control (CDC)**

- [What Works in Schools" Program](https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth/what-works-in-schools/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-youth/what-works-in-schools/index.html>) - a school-based program that prevents adolescent health risks by improving health education, connecting students to the services they need and making school environments safer and more supportive.
- [Children and School Preparedness](https://www.cdc.gov/children-and-school-preparedness/before-during-after/index.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/children-and-school-preparedness/before-during-after/index.html>) - helping Kids Before, During, and After an Emergency.
- [Tips for Promoting School Employee Wellness](https://www.cdc.gov/assessing-improving-school-health/employee-wellness/tips.html) (<https://www.cdc.gov/assessing-improving-school-health/employee-wellness/tips.html>)

## **National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) (administered by SAMHSA)**

<https://www.nctsn.org/>

Contains an abundance of resources, including:

- Tip sheets
- Educator resources
- Family supports

## **U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs / National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

<https://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

Tools and Apps appropriate for ALL community members:

- Mindfulness Coach
- Insomnia Coach
- COVID/Coping Coach
- Breath retraining
- Muscle relaxation

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## **SECTION 7 — CRISIS & IMMEDIATE SUPPORT**

These services are free, confidential, available 24/7, and safe for youth, adults, families, educators, and community members.

### **When to Seek Immediate Help**

Contact emergency services or a trusted adult if you or someone you know:

- Talks about wanting to die or self-harm
- Expresses hopelessness or despair
- Has intense anxiety or panic
- Shows sudden, drastic mood or behavior changes
- Is at risk of harming themselves or others
- Shows signs of substance overdose
- Feels unable to care for themselves safely

Reaching out is a sign of **strength**, not weakness.

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### **Hope4NC Helpline**

**Call: 1-855-587-3463**

**Who it helps:** Hope4NC assists individuals in communities as they recover from Hurricane Helene's devastating impacts. Hope4NC is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

**What they provide:**

- Individual Crisis Outreach and Support
- Group Crisis Outreach
- Public Education
- Community Networking and Support
- Assessment, Referral, and Resource Connections

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 **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**

**Call or Text: 988**

**Chat:** 988lifeline.org/chat

**Who it helps:** Anyone experiencing emotional distress, thoughts of suicide, or a mental health crisis.

**What they provide:**

- Immediate support
- Trained crisis counselors
- Safety planning
- Connection to local services

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 **SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline**

**Call or Text: 1-800-985-5990**

**Who it helps:** People experiencing distress related to hurricanes, floods, natural disasters, or emergencies.

**What they provide:**

- Psychological first aid
- Crisis emotional support
- Disaster-related mental health help

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**SAMHSA FindTreatment.gov**

**Website:** <https://findtreatment.gov/>

**Who it helps:** Anyone seeking affordable mental health or substance use treatment.

**What it provides:**

- Searchable directories
- Filters by insurance, location, cost

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**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Support Groups**

**Call: 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)**

**Who it helps:** teens, adults, families. Local and virtual groups available.

**What they provide:**

- Peer-led emotional support
  - Education
  - Safe community spaces
- 

### **Maternal Mental Health Hotline (HRSA)**

**Call: 1-833-852-6262**

**Who it helps:** Pregnant or postpartum individuals, partners, and families. Support for pregnancy-related or postpartum mental health concerns.

**Services include:**

- Emotional support
  - Resource guidance
  - Real-time help
- 

## **SECTION 8 — TOOLS & WORKSHEETS**

[Appendix A:](#) Grounding & Regulation Strategies for Young Children

[Appendix B:](#) Feeling Identification for Young Children

[Appendix C:](#) Grounding Tools for Teens & Adults

[Appendix D:](#) Personal Self-Care Plan (Teens & Adults)

[Appendix E:](#) Daily Regulation Habits (All Ages)

[Appendix F:](#) Action Planning for Educators & Staff

[Appendix G:](#) Family Resilience Plan

[Appendix H:](#) School Support Ecosystem Map Template

[Appendix I:](#) Scenario Practice Examples

[Appendix J:](#) Reflection Prompts

[Appendix K:](#) Apps, Videos, Books, & Digital Tools

## APPENDIX A: Grounding & Regulation Tools for Young Children

### From Head Start & Sesame Street

All tools in this list are freely available at: [HeadStart.gov](https://headstart.gov)

#### Sesame Street Mindfulness Practices With Children

(<https://headstart.gov/browse/series/mindfulness-practices-children>)

#### **Includes:**

- *Bubble Breathing with Abby*
- *Body Scan with Big Bird*
- *Whole Body Listening with Elmo*
- *Notice with Cookie Monster*
- *Self-Love with Grover*

#### Promoting Children's Self Regulation With Tucker the Turtle

(<https://headstart.gov/video/promoting-childrens-self-regulation-tucker-turtle>)

- *Tucker the Turtle Takes Time to Tuck and Think*

These videos and activities help children learn to calm their bodies, name emotions, and practice self-control.

#### Chair Stretches (<https://headstart.gov/mental-health/article/mindful-moments-chair-stretches>)

- This video teaches several chair stretches that can be used in the classroom for an energy reset. Can also be used by individuals for a moment of mindfulness and a physical reset.

### **Additional Regulation Strategies**

The following tools help the body and mind return to a calmer state during moments of overwhelm:

Temperature reset – hold something cool or warm to bring attention back to the present moment.

Movement reset – stretch, shake out your hands, stand, or take a brief walk to release tension.

Breath reset – slow inhales and longer exhales help settle the nervous system.

Focus reset – name three things you can see or hear to help re-center your attention.

Pressure reset – gently press your feet into the ground or press your palms together for stability.

## APPENDIX B: Feeling Identification for Younger Children

### **Morning Check-In (Home or Classroom):**

**This tool can help a child feel seen and connected and can also assist them with emotional awareness and regulation.**

#### **“How Am I Today?” (Circle One)**

My Emotion:

-  Happy
-  Okay
-  Not great
-  Upset
-  Overwhelmed

My Energy Level:

-  A lot
-  Some
-  Low

**One thing I need today:**

**One thing I’m grateful for:**

### **“Balloon Stress” Metaphor (All Ages)**

Think of stress like air in a balloon:

- A little air = manageable
- Too much air = pressure and overwhelm, can lead to “popping”
- Letting out air safely = grounding, support, coping tools

This metaphor helps children, teens, and adults understand emotional pressure and relief.

## APPENDIX C: Grounding Tools for Teens & Adults

“When Your Mind Feels Busy: Try One of These Grounding Tools”

### 1. 5-4-3-2-1 Senses Grounding

Look around and slowly name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste or imagine tasting

**When to use it:** Anytime someone feels overwhelmed, anxious, or distracted.

**Helps with:** Panic, racing thoughts, emotional flooding

### 2. Slow Belly Breathing / Diaphragmatic Breathing

Place one hand on the belly.

Inhale slowly through the nose → belly rises

Exhale slowly through the mouth → belly falls

**Helps with:** Anxiety, anger, stress, transitions, focus.

### 3. “Hand on Heart” Self-Soothing

Place your hand on your chest and take a slow breath.

Say (or think):

**“Right now, I am safe.”**

**Helps with:** Emotional overwhelm, grounding, nighttime worries (for children too).

### 4. “Press Into Your Feet” Grounding

Place both feet on the floor.

Gently press down and notice the support beneath you.

**Helps with:** Dissociation, feeling “floaty,” anxiety.

### 5. Name 3 Things That Are Okay Right Now

Something you see

Something you hear

Something your body is doing well

**Helps with:** Feeling overwhelmed, re-centering

## **6. “Mindful Check-In”**

### **Ask:**

- What am I feeling?
- What do I need?
- What would help right now?

**Helps with:** Self-awareness, emotional labeling, burnout prevention.

**Great for:** Teachers, parents, teens, and older kids.

## **7. Quick Movement Breaks**

Small bursts of movement can release tension and reset the mind and body:

- Chair stretches
- Shoulder rolls
- Mindful walking
- Reaching up, then stretching down
- Jumping jacks

## APPENDIX D: Personal Self-Care Plan (Teens & Adults)

Title: “**Taking Care of Myself Helps Me Care for Others**”

What helps me feel calm:

What helps me recharge:

People I can reach out to:

One boundary I want to set:

One healthy habit I want to practice this week:

## APPENDIX E: Daily Regulation Habits (All Ages)

**Work these habits into your daily routine for stress management**

### Morning:

- Slow breathing
- Drink water
- Stretch
- Think of something good
- Ask for help if needed

### During the Day:

- Ask for a break
- 5-4-3-2-1 grounding
- Count to 10
- Take a screen break
- Quiet corner
- Talk to an adult

### Evening:

- Screen break
- Share a story
- Say how I feel
- Breathing exercise
- Gratitude moment

## APPENDIX F: Action Planning for Educators & Staff

Title: **“My Carry-Forward Plan”**

1. One practice I will begin using right away:
2. One strategy I will share with colleagues:
3. One thing to remember when things get hard:
4. One resource from this booklet I plan to revisit:

## APPENDIX G: Family Resilience Plan

Title: **“Our Family’s Support Plan”**

When someone in our family feels stressed, we can:

- Take a walk
- Use grounding tools
- Sit quietly together
- Talk about feelings
- Listen to music

Write more ideas here:

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People we can call for help:

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Things that help our home feel calm:

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Our family promise:

“We will support one another as we heal.”

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## APPENDIX H: School Support Ecosystem Map Template

### School Support Ecosystem Map

#### Center Circle: Me / My Role

Surrounding circles:

- Students
- Classroom supports
- Counselors
- School nurse
- Grade-level team
- Administration
- Behavioral health contacts
- District supports
- Community resources (education-aligned only, if appropriate)

#### Prompts:

- Who do I go to for support?
- Who relies on me for support?
- What pathways exist? What gaps exist?

## APPENDIX I: Scenario Practice Examples

Black, P., Henderson-Smith, L., & Flinspach, S. (2021, September 21). *Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit*. National Center for School Safety.

<https://www.nc2s.org/resource/trauma-informed-resilience-oriented-schools-toolkit/>

### **Scenario: A Student Becomes Upset and Refuses Work**

Try:

- Calm tone
- Offer choice: “Would it help to go to the calming corner, or to burn off some energy with some movement?”
- Validate frustration
- Use grounding tool

### **Scenario: A Teen Withdraws After Losing Their Home**

Try:

- Gentle check-in
- Flexible deadlines
- Rest breaks
- Offer connection without pushing

### **Scenario: An Educator Feels Burnt Out**

Try:

- Peer support
- Wellness micro-breaks
- Boundaries
- Ask for help when needed

These scenarios help adults respond with **compassion + structure**.

## APPENDIX J: Reflection Prompts

Use these prompts during healing circles, journaling, table work, or closing reflections.

### **Belonging Prompts**

- “What grounds you in your work as an educator?”
- “What has helped you feel connected to your school community this year?”
- “What supports you emotionally after challenging days?”
- “How have you seen belonging show up among your students?”

### **Skill-Based Prompts**

- “What is one thing you’ve learned about yourself during recovery?”
- “What skill has strengthened your resilience in the last few months?”
- “How do you support students when they experience big emotions?”
- “What tools do you want to feel more confident using?”

### **Support Network Prompts**

- “Who do you rely on at work — and who relies on you?”
- “What does collaboration look like at your school in times of stress?”
- “What support systems are working well for you? What’s missing?”
- “How do you know when a colleague or student needs extra support?”

### **Generosity Prompts**

- “What is one gift or insight you can offer your school community?”
- “What practice do you want to carry forward?”
- “Who in your building needs encouragement right now?”
- “What will you ‘give back’ after today’s forum?”

## APPENDIX K: Apps, Videos, Books & Digital Tools

### Free Apps for Teens & Adults:

- [Breathe2Relax](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe2relax/id425720246) (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe2relax/id425720246) — Guided breathing
- [IBreathe](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ibreathe-relax-and-breathe/id1296605806) (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/ibreathe-relax-and-breathe/id1296605806) – Guided breathing & relaxation strategies
- [Mindfulness Coach](https://mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach) (https://mobile.va.gov/app/mindfulness-coach) — VA-developed mindfulness (public use)
- [Insight Timer](https://insighttimer.com/) (https://insighttimer.com/) — Meditation, sleep, stress relief
- [Smiling Mind](https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app) (https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app) — Habit formation and skills for promotion of mental well-being
- [Medito](https://meditofoundation.org/medito-app) (https://meditofoundation.org/medito-app) — Free, nonprofit mindfulness app

### Resources For Children:

- [Breath, Think, Do with Sesame Street](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe-think-do-with-sesame/id721853597) (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/breathe-think-do-with-sesame/id721853597) — Helps teach skills such as problem solving, self-control, planning, and task persistence.
- [Emotionary by Funny Feelings](https://apps.apple.com/us/app/emotionary-by-funny-feelings/id515860459) (https://apps.apple.com/us/app/emotionary-by-funny-feelings/id515860459) — A digital dictionary creating an interactive way to expand your emotional vocabulary
- [Cosmic Kids](https://app.cosmickids.com/) (https://app.cosmickids.com/) — (14-day free trial and then \$10/mo or \$65/yr) A large library of yoga, mindfulness, and exercise videos for kids (ages 3-9), featuring themed Yoga Adventures (like Frozen, Minecraft), Zen Den mindfulness, Peace Out relaxations, high-energy Super Yoga, Sleep Adventures, and Yoga Discos.
- [Connecting with Your Child During Challenging Moments](https://headstart.gov/publication/connecting-your-child-during-challenging-moments) (https://headstart.gov/publication/connecting-your-child-during-challenging-moments) — Resource and printable PDF for supporting children during stressful events

### Video Learning Series:

- [Helping a Friend: The Power of Asking and Listening \(teens\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Eq-Ygjw1A) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E2Eq-Ygjw1A)

- [Let's Talk About Mental Health \(teens\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN9ch4DjDSE)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sN9ch4DjDSE>)
- [Should I be concerned? Understanding and talking about mental health with your child](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPO3y-b6dx8) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TPO3y-b6dx8>)
- [Head Start "Mindful Moments" \(stretches, hand exercises, SOFT method\)](https://headstart.gov/mental-health/article/managing-stress-mindful-moments)  
(<https://headstart.gov/mental-health/article/managing-stress-mindful-moments>)
- [Understanding Stress and Resilience in Young Children](https://headstart.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-stress-resilience-young-children)  
(<https://headstart.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-stress-resilience-young-children>)

#### **Books:**

- [The Highway Inside Me: A Resiliency Workbook for Children, Youth and Families](https://www.amazon.com/Highway-Inside-Me-Resiliency-Workbook-Children-Youth-Families-Julian-Cate/dp/1072092182) by Julian Cate, based on the tools and concepts of Resources for Resilience™ Reconnect for Resilience curriculum. Available for purchase at (<https://www.amazon.com/Highway-Inside-Me-Resiliency-Caregivers/dp/1072092182>)
- [There Was a Hurricane](https://ko-fi.com/s/bbfff7524d) by Rachel Jamison and Karin Erickson; Written after Hurricane Helene, this book helps to explain the disaster and its impact to young children. Often called a social story, the book names emotions felt by children and adults in the aftermath of the hurricane, and provides suggestions for strategies children can use to manage their strong feelings. [There Was a Hurricane pdf - Rachel J. & Karin E.'s Ko-fi Shop](https://ko-fi.com/s/bbfff7524d) (<https://ko-fi.com/s/bbfff7524d>)

#### **Tip Sheets & Fact Sheets:**

- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\) - Age Related Reactions to Traumatic Event](https://www.nctsn.org/resources/age-related-reactions-traumatic-event) (<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/age-related-reactions-traumatic-event>)
- [The National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\) - Helping Youth After Community Trauma - Tips for Educators](https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-after-community-trauma-tips-educators)  
(<https://www.nctsn.org/resources/helping-youth-after-community-trauma-tips-educators>)