

# EARTHQUAKES & CHILDREN'S ANXIETY

LIVING along the Cascadia fault line, we experience small earthquakes & are at risk, of facing THE BIG ONE that scientists have predicted will occur any time between now & hundreds of years from now.

**In fact, during the first two weeks of January 2013 there were 4 earthquakes ranging from 2.5 to 7.5 in magnitude.**

The thought of an impending destructive earthquake combined with media coverage of recent earthquakes, may contribute to a rise in anxiety and stress for many, including children. Images of the destruction and talk among peers are factors that contribute to anxiety in children. However, there are measures that you can take when it comes to your children's fears about natural disasters before or after they occur.

## Observe

Young children have a hard time expressing themselves the same way as adults do, so try observing how they are playing, or what they are drawing as expressions of their fear. You may find that your child is drawing or expressing re-enactments of an earthquake if they experienced one, or are drawing or expressing their anxieties surrounding a potential quake. This type of behavior is normal, so be sure to talk to your child if you notice anything.

### *Anxious children may be-*

Tearful

Moody & Irritable

Experiencing sleep disturbances

Easily Startled

Looking out for danger

Isolating themselves

Try asking your child about their drawings or behavior, making sure to listen carefully to what their fears are. Share with them what you know about the earthquake, and be sure to talk them through their fears, showing as little anxiety as you can. It is important for you to build a safe environment in which they can share their fears - no matter how imaginative they are - with you. If they are expressing themselves aggressively or using anger, you need to talk to them using a nurturing, yet firm approach to let them know that their behavior is not acceptable.



## Routine

To alleviate anxiety from either directly experiencing an earthquake, or simply from the anxieties surrounding a possible quake, it is important for parents to implement and continue a daily routine for their children. When a child's routine is interrupted, they will experience fear or anxiety. Some ideas of how to continue a regular routine include - *securing the presence of at least one parent, the child waking up and going to bed around the same time each day, participating in play dates with the same children, or meeting with the same teacher.*

## Understanding

A large part of helping your child to deal with anxieties around earthquakes is to understand what they are going through. A child's biggest fears could include - the actual occurrence or reoccurrence, injury or death, separation from family, or being left by themselves. Their fears are derived from their imagination, or may be stimulated from real life events.

Understanding the fears of your child can be done by encouraging your child to talk about their fears. Because children have a hard time expressing their selves, it may be beneficial to bring in other members of the community (teachers, extended family, friends, etc.) to share their experiences as well. This creates a welcome environment for sharing.



## Making a Plan

Another way to help alleviate anxieties for your child (or yourself) is to make a plan for if/when an earthquake occurs. This can include anything from - *making a meeting plan, to creating an emergency kit together.*

An **Emergency Kit** should include -

First Aid Kit  
Blankets  
Portable radio

Class ABS Fire Extinguisher  
Non-perishable food  
Flashlight & spare batteries

Toiletry bag (soap, toothpaste, tissue etc)  
Sealed water bottles & water purification tablets  
Shoes to protect your feet from broken glass

Practice **drop, cover, and hold on** with your children, and show them how to identify safe spots in every room. Come up with an **emergency whistle or knock** for family members. By knowing that you have a plan in place, your child will feel safer in the event of an emergency.

**If you feel that your child is overwhelmed by anxieties surrounding a potential earthquake, consider professional counselling and contact your EFAP.**

**YOUR LOGO HERE**

**For confidential assistance**  
**Brown Crawshaw 1.800.668.2055**  
[www.browncrawshaw.com](http://www.browncrawshaw.com)