

Helping each other after the earthquake

Tips for helping
your family and
friends cope



How you can help

Earthquakes have a big impact on families and communities.

We all have to help but sometimes don't know how. This kind of event can be very traumatic for everyone and each of us will cope differently. Most people will get their support and advice from family and friends. You don't have to be an expert, just being available can help.

- **Listen, listen, listen.** You don't need answers, listening helps people work out their own thoughts, ideas and solutions. Listen for as long as it takes until it's clear that you really understand how it is for them. If they don't want to talk that's healthy too – for some people not talking is a way of coping.
- **Use questions rather than statements.** 'Are you ok?' is a good starter. Open reflective questions are helpful, "How has it been for you and the kids?" "So, what options are you considering?" Just asking shows you care and are thinking about them.
- **Sometimes people find it easier to talk when they're doing something else.** e.g. driving, fixing the house together, cooking or walking the kids to the park.



- **Make an offer of help that's genuine and practical.**

"How about I care for the kids to give you a break for a couple of hours?" Other helpful ideas are: organising working bees one house at a time, shared meals, play dates for the kids, making meals for the freezer.

- **Make an offer of help that lasts.** "When you're ready, I'm here for you". Be prepared to provide support when asked and to go the distance. Some people will want to talk about the earthquake in a few months time. Be ready to listen then too.

- **Remember people know what they need and what will help them.** Ask how you can help, and what they would prefer. Don't take over. People know what works best for them.

- **Ask how they want you to keep in touch.** If people are feeling overwhelmed they may prefer to communicate via email. If you live far away – don't worry, a phone call can make all the difference. In fact some people prefer talking over the phone.

- **Be open to receiving help as well as giving it.** 'Give and take' is a natural part of relationships. It's important to let people help in return.

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