Comfort for Kids

was developed in response to the events of September 11 by an extraordinary partnership of two for-profit companies and two non-profit organizations. Bright Horizons Family Solutions, JPMorgan Chase, Mercy Corps and the Dougy Center for Grieving Children partnered to support children in the aftermath of September 11, with an emphasis on those with limited access to services. We sought to help families address fear, grief and trauma while promoting understanding and respect for others.

Comfort for Kids prepares members of the community to lead parent meetings and staff workshops. Our booklet What Happened to the World? Helping Children Cope in Turbulent Times highlights common reactions to crisis and trauma and helps parents and caregivers know how to help children heal. Participants are coached in the accompanying Facilitation Guide enabling them to train peers and parents.

Comfort for Kids is proud to introduce “Celebrating Diversity through the Arts,” workshops combining multicultural exploration with interactive kid-friendly activities based on music, art and storytelling. For qualifying organizations, our 2½ hour workshops are free and take place on-site.

To learn more

If you are interested in learning more about Comfort for Kids, please contact us at:

Comfort for Kids
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Or, check online at:
www.mercycorps.org
www.brighthorizons.com
www.jpmorganchase.com/emergencyrelief

For additional copies

Additional free copies can be downloaded from:
www.mercycorps.org

You may also call:
(800) 292-3355 ext. 250

Promoting continued healing for our children
Dear Parents, Educators, Childcare Providers and Friends:

In mid-September 2001, JPMorgan Chase, Bright Horizons Family Solutions and Mercy Corps joined in partnership to provide information to parents and people working with children in the wake of September 11.

The heart of the Comfort for Kids program was built around a book by Jim Greenman called What Happened to the World? Helping Children Cope in Turbulent Times. To date, over 185,000 copies of this book have been distributed through the early childcare community, schools, community outreach organizations, mental health organizations and through partner networks around the country. Over 2,500 people have been trained using Comfort for Kids materials and our professional facilitation guides. Our train-the-trainer component has allowed us to touch the lives of tens of thousands of at-risk children.

As September 11, 2002, approached, we joined millions of people around the country who expressed genuine concern about how to prepare individuals and organizations for the anniversary of the attacks. They wondered what to expect from their children one year later, and what they could do to both honor those lost and promote continued healing within our communities.

What follows is the result of those dialogues; a guide for parents, professionals and paraprofessionals that brings wisdom from the therapeutic world to your kitchen table or classroom. We encourage you to use this information and activities as a “celebration of life,” so you and your children can move forward and heal in healthy ways.

We share the responsibility for our children’s future; our actions shape their view of the world around them. By supporting children through their fears, sadness and shock, we provide what they need most: to know they are loved and valued, to respect others different from themselves and—most importantly—to retain the innocence and safety of childhood.

Sincerely,

Joy Bunson
Senior Vice President
Leadership and Organizational Development
JPMorgan Chase

Linda Mason
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Chief Executive Officer
Mercy Corps
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This book represents the passion and commitment of the many people and organizations who contributed to its development. A heartfelt thanks to all of you for your thoughtful and timely additions to the materials, with particular appreciation to Marta Colburn for both content contributions and editorial direction, and to Randee R. Rubin and the MarketingCommunications team for the design. The following list represents the primary contributors to this book.

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Special thanks also to Jim Greenman of Bright Horizons Family Solutions. His book What Happened to the World?, developed for Comfort for Kids in response to September 11, 2001, provided some of the core concepts for this guide. Sections from What Happened to the World? were adapted for use in these anniversary materials. In addition, activities and resources in this book draw from the Comfort for Kids module “Celebrating Diversity through the Arts.”

Comfort for Kids is the result of an extraordinary partnership among organizations whose staff committed intensive time and generously shared key skills, knowledge and support at critical stages in the design and delivery of the project. The reach and impact of Comfort for Kids reflects the selfless input from these individuals. These anniversary materials are built on the foundation they laid.
introduction

On September 11, 2001, approximately three thousand people perished in the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks; tens of thousands of residents were displaced, and even more lost jobs through business relocations and closures. The entire nation and many around the world felt profound fear and grief.

The next twelve months brought intense movement toward recovery. Memorials were attended, hundreds of millions of dollars were generated from public and private sources and the wreckage was fully cleared by June. While much has been done, much also remains incomplete and unresolved. The war in Afghanistan, local and national economic decline and continued flurries of terrorist threats all serve to keep our country jittery and on edge.

This booklet is intended to help parents take stock of their children’s recovery. Anniversaries can trigger a range of feelings, particularly for those navigating through trauma and loss. Timely information can help adults anticipate children’s reactions one year—or several years—after a disaster or death. The following pages include tools to identify red flags—signs showing a need for professional help—and ways to distinguish these from other, less worrisome reactions. They also outline simple things to say and do to comfort children in the wake of catastrophes both public and private that have already taken place, or that may occur over the coming years.

Although this booklet was written for the first anniversary of September 11, 2001, it can serve as a resource for grappling with unwanted change of all kinds. Adults play a central role in helping children mourn and heal, and with thoughtful attention they can guide children through a healthy—though rarely neat or painless—recovery process. The principles in this booklet are universal, and can be used with children of all ages. Loving, communicating families are a child’s best defense against future disappointments and adversity. Likewise, the people who make up our neighborhoods and caregiving settings can—in the best of all possible worlds—pass along values and skills that fortify each child’s emotional resilience.

While many may dread traumatic anniversaries, these dates actually present a valuable opportunity for learning and healing. The “work” of healthy recovery includes the need to acknowledge loss, address lingering fears, and find sustenance within community. Rebuilding our cities depends on strengthening both our individual families and the bonds between various ethnic groups and nationalities. From “directly affected” to “indirectly affected” to “vicariously affected,” we all lived through a historic event and are all key to helping one another find equilibrium.

Since September 11, 2001, educators and therapists across the country have observed anger and antipathy toward Muslims, and racially based prejudice continues to be one of our society’s greatest social challenges. On the other hand, in many locales the event catalyzed a process of learning about diversity both in the United States and the global community. The second half of this booklet provides concrete, hands-on activities for children promoting interaction and learning between cultures. Parents and those who work with children can use these activities to heighten empathy for people of all ethnicities, languages and religious traditions.

Many elements of domestic and international life changed as a result of September 11, 2001. Together, we adapt to a world that includes the threat of terrorist attacks and continuing international conflict. Although we can’t recreate the sense of safety we had before September 11, 2001, we can give our children crucial emotional “building blocks” to cope with whatever the future might bring.
Over the past year, mental health campaigns such as Comfort for Kids provided education about common reactions following a public disaster. Disturbing feelings and physiological reactions were talked about and put in perspective, and participants learned ways to manage their complex emotions. As we review this body of knowledge, it is important to remember that a wide range of reactions is normal, from minimal to quite severe. In addition—and as common sense would tell us—over the past year, emotional responses have generally become less intense.

However, feelings of depression, anxiety and anger may reemerge around 9/11/02, and during subsequent anniversaries of this day. People of all ages may find it harder to function, and might struggle with memory and clear thinking. Problems sleeping or eating might return, and some may feel drained and lethargic. It would not be surprising for some to actively fear a subsequent attack, and feel panicked as they use tunnels or bridges, or walk through crowded public spaces.
The 9/11 anniversary will be highly public, with extensive media coverage and nearly universal awareness of the date’s importance. Memorials and commemorations of all kinds will take place—from personal moments of silence, to events attended by thousands. For the most part, this is a healthy thing as people typically heal more fully in and through communities. But we also need to recognize when it all becomes “too much,” and honor our individual needs for recovery.

Some television coverage will be deliberately sensationalized, designed to evoke and even exploit primitive emotions. Especially for the many survivors who still suffer, viewing TV images should be limited. Similarly, parents must carefully select the television/media their children watch since constant replaying of horrific scenes can retraumatize. (Never underestimate the impact of television on children of all ages, even the very young.)

Given the immense scale of the 9/11 disaster, slowly emerging, private reactions may be engulfed by the public events around the anniversary. It is important to remember that people respond to loss in different ways, some culturally bound, some based on family patterns. All individuals must work to find a style of remembrance that feels comfortable given who they are. This is especially true for handling grief within a family. Parents can create commemorative events with their children, acknowledging feelings of vulnerability and sources of strength. However families choose to mark this date, it is important to create and carry out plans together with plenty of time for conversation.

In general, anniversaries trigger the feelings and memories of the original event. For example, people sometimes have strong reactions at six-month, one-year and two-year intervals. While anniversaries are not problematic for all people, this booklet focuses on problems that may possibly arise and seeks to equip families to respond.

At one extreme, there are those who feel as if they are reliving the day itself; overwhelming images and physical sensations may return, and a few will worry they may never recover. Still others have vague feelings of heaviness, as if something is “not quite right.” For some people, the effects of the crisis itself do not surface until weeks, months, or even years later. As time passes reactions are individualized with no one right way to feel or be.

It is not uncommon to have unconscious reactions to anniversary events, especially among children. They describe a feeling like a “rumbling” or “pressure” that gradually builds as the date nears. For those who have forgotten the date or time of year of their particular loss, oncoming sadness or agitation may provide an important cue.
friends and adults at school. Others seem to “remember without remembering,” working through issues and feelings long buried. More than adults, children move abruptly in and out of painful emotions, based on how much they can handle. One moment a child may cry about the loss of a sibling and a few moments later be smiling and insist on visiting a friend.

Children “check” parents and the adults around them to see if they can tolerate feelings of sadness—children need to feel safe in order to grieve. It’s hard to see children in pain, and sometimes loving adults discourage the expression of darker moods. Children can feel abandoned if they don’t feel it’s okay to discuss powerful feelings with the adults in their lives. Parents must be prepared for their child’s sadness or anger; ironically, a big part of this process is for caregivers to address their own tumultuous emotions.

In addition, parents can seek to unravel the feelings underlying a child’s questions and make a conscious effort to address these feelings. Children often develop a misplaced sense of guilt or responsibility at the loss or injury of a loved one and wish they had spoken or behaved differently. These regrets can get in the way of healing and are best addressed through gentle “reality checks” and reassurance from caring adults.

Children both understand death and show their distress based on where they are in their development. For example, very young children have a hard time with the notion that death is permanent, and happens to everyone. As they get older and their cognitive skills develop, they are increasingly able to grasp death’s finality. Thus, it is not unusual for children to re-mourn old losses. For children who have been through a crisis, years of relative calm might pass and then
suddenly—when least expected—new problems arise. Coping strategies that worked earlier are less effective, and children can be flooded with upsetting memories and feelings. Also, special days like a birthday or graduation can bring back the distress of missing a loved one.

In short, recovery from trauma and/or grief is a very long process, and includes times when things seem worse, not better. Most children’s distress resolves naturally, over a period of time. Others need a little bit of help from a professional counselor, or trusted religious or community figure. In general, those who have experienced previous trauma will be more vulnerable in the face of new challenges. As described below, unusual moods and behaviors in children provide important clues necessitating a response: for example, when a normally outgoing child suddenly withdraws, or a cheerful child becomes clingy, irritable, or easily angered.

A child’s recovery depends on the help of supportive, caring adults. Vulnerable children are especially sensitive to the moods and behaviors of their parents or caretakers. Once a tragedy strikes, the job of the caregiver is to help children weave the event into their life story in ways that are affirming rather than destructive.

Children are extremely resilient and bounce back easily. It’s important not to “expect” negative emotions or behaviors after a crisis. Many children do just fine, and truly are able to put difficult events such as 9/11 behind them. In addition, some positive feelings and responses may develop. In the past year families and communities have come together and some children may feel a sense of pride as they contemplate the generosity and strength of many around the world. Whenever possible, adults should help children build on this foundation of solidarity.

This being said, it is important not to overlook the signs of a child’s distress. The following guidelines are adapted from What Happened to the World? by Jim Greenman, and used in Comfort for Kids’ New York City program. These guidelines apply to children experiencing trauma and/or loss of all kinds. They are most applicable immediately following a crisis, but similar responses may reemerge during periods of stress or when reminded of the original event.

One challenge for families is addressing the emotional needs of various-aged children. While all children benefit from...
routines and calm and thoughtful adults, the developmental differences among siblings must be thought through. Younger children will need to be sheltered from television exposure, while teens will often desire detailed discussions and a chance to express their emotions. This discrepancy requires that families set aside time for each child, and if necessary call on family and community support networks for assistance.

**children under three**

Children under the age of three absorb the tension, fear or withdrawal of the people around them. Even very young babies react when parents are upset or depressed; they can feel increased heart rates when being held and absorb mood swings and anxieties. Older children in this age group will be able to take in images from the media, but lack the ability to fully understand them.

**Common Reactions to Stress in Children under Three**

Infants and toddlers show their distress primarily through their actions: being irritable or contrary, clingy and tearful. They can also respond by disrupting their daily routines: changing their eating, sleeping and toilet patterns. Some young children become listless and apathetic in response to severe changes in their environment.

**What Do Children under the Age of Three Need?**

Children under the age of three need normal routines and favorite rituals. They—like all children—thrive in peaceful households with yelling and chaos kept to a bare minimum. Exposure to the media should be very limited, as should adult conversations about crisis or disaster in their presence. In frightening times, as well as during periods considered “normal,” children need ample attention from calm, loving, reassuring adults.

**children ages three to five**

Three- to five-year-old children are far more aware of events around them than we often think. However, their ability to accurately interpret the information they absorb is limited. Very young children are magical thinkers, confusing fantasy with reality and mixing up notions of time and space. At this age, they are working through the concepts of cause-and-effect and linear time; this makes the permanence of death hard to grasp.

Preschool-aged children are aware that adults can come and go, often unpredictably, and in times of crisis are likely to fear abandonment. They feel helpless because they know that they do need protection and care, and they worry that something might happen to those they love. This fear may lead them to worry about who will care for them if their loved ones are absent.

Play is children’s work. It is their way of making sense of the world. Play is also the way that children master situations when they feel powerless. Many parents see themes in their children’s play reflecting the particular losses or disappointments faced. This fortunate window into children’s emotions and thoughts offers surprises, insight and opportunities for conversation daily.

**Common Reactions to Stress in Children Ages Three to Five**

When children ages three to five are feeling stress, bedwetting and other signs of regression such as speech difficulties or fear of being left alone may emerge. Children may also have a heightened fear of the dark, monsters or animals or may experience nightmares. Loss or increase of appetite may occur, as well as withdrawal or testing behavior.
What Do Children Ages Three to Five Need Most?
Like children under the age of three, these children crave normal routines, a peaceful household, and ample time with calm, loving and reassuring adults. Children under the age of five respond positively to physical reassurance, special moments at bedtime and opportunities to draw and express themselves. Actively listen for opportunities to hear what they are thinking and feeling, and create opportunities to have gentle conversations with them. (It’s always best for parents to take the lead in telling children what is going on, rather than for children to hear it from others.) Limit the amount of television they see that might cause them to be fearful, especially repeated images of the attacks.

children ages six to ten
Children this age increasingly inhabit the world outside their home. They can understand reality and have a grasp on what is permanent, but they lack perspective. They are full of questions and expect honest answers, wrapped around details that matter to them. They understand loss and can identify with the people directly affected by events. They think about what life is like for others. Their fears are real, realistic given their limited perspective, and tend to focus on bad things that could happen to themselves and their loved ones.

At this age they are envisioning their adult selves—what they will do when they grow up. In times of crisis, dramatic heroes and villains hold special fascination for them and can serve as models of bravery, patience and strength. Increasingly, peers play a role in shaping their thoughts, feelings and reactions to events. School-age children are interested in the rules, how things work and the difference between good and bad, right and wrong. Their sense of fairness and justice can lead to outrage in the face of terrible acts.

Common Reactions to Stress in Children Ages Six to Ten
Typical responses for these ages include irritability, whining and aggressive behavior at home or at school. Again, regression could occur, taking the form of nail biting or thumb sucking, fear of the dark and clinging to adults. Children may compete with younger siblings for parental attention, have misplaced feelings of responsibility, or obsessively talk about the event. Some children lose interest in school (evidenced by declining grades) and withdraw from their peers. They may also express their feelings physically, with complaints of headaches or exhaustion.

What Do Children Ages Six to Ten Need Most?
These children need normal routines and favorite rituals, a peaceful household and time with calm, loving adults and caregivers who listen to them and honestly answer their questions, with words and explanations they can understand. They benefit from verbal and physical reassurance, opportunities to talk and play with peers, guided exposure to the news and adult discussion, and household plans for safety measures to be taken in future disasters. It is important not to rush “goodnights” when children are anxious and distressed. Try to build in extra time to comfort them when they are getting ready to sleep. The amount of extra time will vary depending on your child’s needs, but could range from a half hour to one and a half hours or more.

adolescents ages eleven to thirteen
These children are at a critical age between childhood and young adulthood, and characteristics and responses may be drawn from both the primary school-age section and the teen section, depending on the children, and their level of trauma, fear and/or sensitivity.
teens ages thirteen to eighteen

As children develop through their teenage years they move from predominantly childlike emotional responses to those of young adults. Teenagers often feel overwhelmed by their emotions even in normal times, and experience a vast spectrum of ups and downs. Disastrous events or violence can exacerbate these mood swings.

Peers are critically important to teenagers; peer group reactions deeply influence a teen’s decisions and feelings. Peers can heighten anxieties, leaving a teen feeling alone and isolated, or alternatively they can provide a sense of safety and solidarity. Young people may respond to traumatic events with either intensity or professed indifference, particularly in the company of adults. Some will be glued to the television and pore over newspapers and magazines; others will avoid all reminders. Some may have difficulty expressing compassion, concern and anxiety, but inside feel inadequate or guilty. Disasters are often hard for teenagers because they are beginning their natural move away from their family and it may seem “childish” to need family support and comfort. The response of adults to “circle the wagons” may cause resistance or conflict.

Teenagers watch adults closely, particularly with regard to issues of justice and prejudice. Older teenagers may worry about what the future holds for them in a world where war and military conscription are possibilities.

Common Reactions to Stress in Teenagers

Youth often respond to stressful situations with the classic teen-age behavior—only “more so.” They may display indifference, dark humor, cynicism, rebellion at home, refusal to cooperate, aggressive behavior, or preoccupation with themselves. They also may show some of the signs associated with depression, such as appetite or sleep disturbances, headaches, or other physical complaints, fluctuating energy levels, confusion, poor concentration, withdrawal and isolation, and low self-esteem. In addition, teens may have problems in school or engage in self-destructive behavior such as unprotected sex or alcohol/drug abuse.

What Do Teenagers Need Most?

In spite of the fact that they are inclined to doubt your ability to help, teens need to know that adults are there for them when they want them. They also benefit from opportunities to honestly talk about their feelings without overly intrusive responses; listening rather than lecturing. Particularly in stressful times, they need thoughtful adult perspectives on war, justice, tolerance and other issues of the time, as well as peers to be with and discuss problems with seriously. Youth also should be encouraged to help others; teens are particularly empowered through volunteer work, mentoring younger children, and community activities. Involve them in planning for safety measures in case of future disasters and in general, give them structured but undemanding responsibilities.
The main difference between normal and serious reactions in children of all ages is generally one of degree—serious reactions are simply normal reactions taken to the extreme. You know your child best and if you have concerns, you should follow your intuition. Parents need to discuss situations they feel unable to handle with a school psychologist or counselor, health specialist, or religious leader.

The following serious reactions call for immediate referral:

- Significant developmental delays or regression
- Frequent or continuous crying
- Risk-taking behavior such as promiscuity or drug/alcohol abuse
- Dramatic increase or decrease in weight
- Inability to care for self
- Complete withdrawal
- Disorientation/inability to distinguish reality
- Threats of harm to self or others

**Remember**, referral for all sorts of “normal” reactions may also be helpful, and should be considered if you are concerned.

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Adapted from *35 Ways to Help a Grieving Child*, by the Dougy Center (www.grievingchild.org).
strategies for helping a young child feel better

There are many ways to help young children learn to calm themselves when they are upset. This includes teaching them to ask for a hug, talk to someone who listens, rock in a chair or swing, cuddle with a favorite stuffed animal, curl up in blankets, draw or color, or go for a long walk or run.

After September 11th, the Comfort for Kids project assembled Comfort Kits for over 12,000 vulnerable New York City children to help them feel more secure, express themselves, and learn about other cultures. Each kit included age-appropriate items, with a booklet describing each item and its use. It was clear that children found the following items comforting, soothing and helpful as they came to grips with all that had happened around them.

A stuffed animal. Each kit had a stuffed cat, dog, or bear. Soft, snuggly stuffed animals big enough to hug provide a great release of tension. They are also a good way to find out what your child is thinking. You can ask small children “Does the bear feel safe?” or “Where does the dog feel safest?” or “What will help the cat feel safer?” By talking about the stuffed animal, small children will tell you about themselves.

A sketchpad and drawing materials. Young children generally draw unselfconsciously, expressing their feelings and thoughts freely. Drawing and other forms of art provide a great release for many kids.

A journal. Kids of all ages like having a place to write their stories, fears and dreams. A great bedtime ritual is to encourage your child to write a positive or special thing that happened that day, and/or a hope for tomorrow.

A flashlight. Control over darkness is invaluable in helping a child feel more secure.

A book. Among the most helpful stories are those about individuals who were afraid, took some risks to overcome their fear and learned about themselves and others in the process. At the back of this booklet is an age-specific bibliography to help you identify a range of options.

A CD. Music is an excellent tool for healing at all ages, and can incorporate rhythms and words from around the world. Our Comfort Kits had Putumayo World Music’s World Playground 2. Key questions included in the kits were “What places have you heard of before?” and “What does this music make you feel or imagine?” These simple questions can open a wonderful dialogue about emotions and cultures.

Children of all ages have special comfort items that are important when they are upset. What items are important to your child? What else might help?
Kid-friendly activities

Have children write a story about someone they admire. Discuss the following questions:

“Which qualities in that person do you feel are strengths, and which do you feel are weaknesses?”

“How can you develop some of the traits you admire in this person?”

Read carefully selected stories to younger children. Listening to stories is a powerful way to learn something about ourselves, because, as we listen, in a sense we “become” everything in the story. Children develop a heightened ability to imagine and embrace all parts of themselves—even contradictory parts—as well as aspects outside their own experience. Teens can play a powerful mentoring role by reading stories to younger children.

If your child has experienced a loss—for example, the loss of a pet—the following “goodbye” activity may help with closure. Trace your child’s hand on a piece of paper, cut out the paper hand, and attach it to a Popsicle stick. Many children like to write their sentiments on the hand, and you can help them with this. Sentiments might include goodbye wishes or things children would have liked to say.

Creating a ritual or memorial

While no commemorative gesture feels “right” given the scale of the disasters on 9/11, we encourage families to consider a personalized memorial. Parents can talk to their children about what kind of ritual they might like to create together. This conversation could include ideas about what has changed, and what the anniversary ritual should address. By helping older children talk about the negative (and positive) effects of the tragedy, they will more easily mourn, understand their own reactions and heal.

Elements of rituals families can plan together include lighting candles, drawing pictures, observing a moment of silence, reading aloud a meaningful poem or short story, each family member expressing thanks for something good in life, talking about all the “helpers/heroes” on 9/11 and reaching out to those in the community who are less fortunate.
Discuss the importance of emotions and how they are an important element in healing, learning and growing. Use the faces below to draw in the expressions that match the feelings listed. Then, talk about how your child is feeling at the moment.

Have your child write or draw about a good or bad dream. Talk about how dreams are part of our mind’s way of dealing with events around us and our emotions.

“How worried are you today?”

Below is a ruler that will help your children measure their feelings. How scared or upset are they because of the terrorist attacks? Have them read the ruler first. Then, starting from the bottom, have them color in the ruler to the number that best describes how they are feeling. The number 1 means they feel very little stress. The number 12 means they feel a lot of stress and need help.

I'm really, really scared and upset. I need help.

I'm very scared and upset. I need extra help to get through this.

I'm scared, but I'll be okay with a little help.

I'm a little scared, but I'm okay.

Nothing scares or bothers me.
Welcome questions and curiosity of all kinds; in this way we will raise engaged, thinking adults, rather than a generation of “followers.”

Classroom activities for young children, from pre-K to 6th grade*

Young children learn about the world through their play, families and the media. Following are a number of ideas for school or after-school programs to help expand children’s view of the world. Some of these activities can also be adapted for home.

- Learn children’s games from various cultures. Search the Internet or ask the librarian for resource ideas.
- Make masks from other cultures.
- Make a “Multicultural Quilt” with symbols from various cultures displayed together. Several classes could work on this together.
- Feature a “show and tell” activity with items from the various cultures represented in the classroom.
- Draw pictures of ourselves, showing some things we’d like others to know about us.

Classroom activities for adolescents & teenagers

- Ask students who/what part of the world they are curious about, fearful of, etc. and have them do a research project that challenges their stereotypes.
- Have students create a play dealing with the problems and pain of being different.
- Ask students to interview a fellow student, faculty/staff or community member from another culture on similarities and differences between their respective cultures and/or issues of respect/disrespect they have experienced. Have students share in class what they learned.

* Some of these suggestions for younger children can be adapted for use with older children by adding to the complexity of the activities.
There are numerous religious and ethnic groups that suffer from stereotypes and prejudicial behavior in the broader community. As a direct consequence of September 11th, some Muslims, Arabs and others of Middle Eastern descent became targets of prejudicial and racist behavior. In addition, many Americans have distanced themselves from these traditions in our own society, particularly in schools. Below are a few suggested activities to address this problem. They are designed to help raise awareness of the diversity and the rich cultural traditions of the Middle East, as well as highlight our shared hopes, values and humanity.

### Resources/activities for use with elementary students

- Two excellent resources with classroom activities are: The Arabs: Activities for Elementary and Middle School Level by Audrey Shabbas, Carol El-Shaieb and Ahlam Nablusi; and Middle Eastern Cultures: Curriculum Manual, K-6 by LuAnn Kern and other teacher consultants to the Michigan Humanities Council.¹
- Read the book The Day of Ahmed’s Secret by Florence Parry Heide and Judith Heide Gilliland. Discuss the daily

### Home-based activities to promote learning about others

- Whenever the opportunity arises, discuss racism, its history and current problems in your community. Model appropriate behavior, as it is the strongest lesson you can provide your children. Demonstrate positive ways of being with others.
- Set aside a regular time—perhaps once a week after school or at bedtime—to explore a culture together. Adult and child can “assign” each other something to bring to the next cultural focus time.
- Plan a regular dinner featuring food from a different country or culture. Combine this with reading a story or listening to music from that area of the world. Supplement these activities with a trip to a museum to learn more about the selected country or culture.

¹All available from AWAIR (www.telegraphave.com/gui/awairproductinfo.html).
life and dreams of Ahmed and how his life differs from those of most American children.

- Ask an Arab or Arab-American to visit your class and write student names in Arabic.

- Traveling Man: The Journey of Ibn Battuta, 1325-1354 by James Rumford is an award-winning book and excellent resource for ages 6 and up to explore the diversity of the Islamic world. Study the travels of Ibn Battuta (the 14th-century Muslim scholar and explorer). This great traveler covered 73,000 miles from Morocco to Cairo, Isfahan, Mogadishu, Constantinople, Samarkand, Delhi, Canton, Granada and Timbuktu.

Resources for use with middle school and high school students

- The curriculum A Medieval Banquet in the Alhambra Palace is a great resource to guide an interdisciplinary and cross-cultural immersion experience in the Andalusian culture of Islamic Spain.

- Women in the Middle East: Tradition and Change by Ramsay M. Harik and Elsa Marston and Women in the Muslim World: Personalities and Perspectives from the Past by Lyn Reese are excellent resources that emphasize diversity and challenge stereotypes of Muslim women.

- Doorways to Islamic Art by Sylvia Godlas is an invaluable cross-curriculum resource that brings Islamic art alive in the classroom through studying its manifestations in the lives of Muslims in more than fifty countries.

- Teaching about Islam and Muslims in the Public School Classroom is a good resource to introduce information for all grade levels about this world faith. Invite a Muslim from the community to participate in the related dialogue.

1 All available from AWAIR (www.telegraphave.com/gui/awairproductinfo.html).
2 Available for free on the Internet from the Council on Islamic Education (www.cie.org)
likely to understand different approaches and values in our respective communities and in other places around the world.

Educating ourselves and our children about different daily realities around the world is another key step toward building local and global community. We can cultivate a true sense of belonging by reaching out to multicultural communities, and actively seeking out opportunities to forge international connections.

These key concepts—learning, belonging and connecting—are interdependent, and critical in making sense of a complex and often frightening world. By challenging some of our basic assumptions, we also learn more about ourselves, our roots and our own history. By educating ourselves we can speak with integrity as we explain complex events to our children.

Healing and unity are also fostered through events that celebrate local and global diversity in our communities. All ages and ethnicities can join in planning events that address issues of justice or incorporate music, food and educational activities from various cultures. Collaborative community-based activities have the power to transform nameless neighbors into lifelong friends.

One of the most powerful tools for healing and for building local and global community is activism. Feeling disempowered, even in a democratic nation, can contribute to depression and apathy. Activism and helping others can take many forms, from advocacy to volunteering to fundraising. People of all ages can take an active role in strengthening their communities and helping others. The collective wisdom of the community, from little children to retirees, is a priceless asset in creating a healthier and safer world.

Children—even very young children—are capable of courage, compassion and helping to build community. Honoring their capacity for generosity not only empowers the young to cope but plants the seeds for children to become contributing members of society. Some of the most touching stories related to September 11th recounted examples of the words and actions of little children in helping others feel better. Consider encouraging your children to do the following activities, or design your own:

- Organize drives for food, toys, or blood.
- Create a mural that represents community and global diversity.
- Plant community gardens or clean up a vacant lot.
- Offer to help older community members with some of their needs.
- Have older children get politically involved; for example, by registering voters.
We’ve heard from many parents and caregivers over the past year. Understandably, some have felt unable/unprepared to answer their children’s questions or soothe their children’s fears. Below we have shared some of their questions, along with suggested responses.

**How can we preserve our children’s sense of childhood in light of continuing threats and worries about terrorism?**

Take all reasonable security precautions with your family; you might want to refer to the “safety planning” section that follows. Having done this, create a sense of safety for your children by remaining calm yourself and attempting to protect your child from unnecessary and frightening information (for example, information that is repetitive or has gory details). Be honest with them, and talk to them with words and examples that fit their age. Maintain a matter-of-fact tone, and keep reminding them that the risk of being hurt in a terrorist attack is small. Most importantly, continue doing the fun things you’ve always done, like going to the beach or the park or doing imaginative play together. We need children to hold onto their innocence and idealism, and we can accomplish this through carefree, life-affirming activities.

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**frequently asked questions**

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**taking care of ourselves**

To take care of children, you need to take care of yourself. This is especially important because children carefully watch parents, and use them as role models for expressing emotions. The following suggestions provide some ways to cope with your feelings. Pick one or two that are realistic and will feel most nurturing to you.

- Discuss your feelings with other adults whose opinions you value.
- Live well: eat right, get regular exercise and do your best to get enough sleep.
- Share regular meals with your family around the same table.
- Seek out people and activities that bring out the best in you. Replenish your spirit and celebrate when you can with friends, faith, family, music and nature.
- Minimize alcohol and caffeine consumption, and drink plenty of water. This will minimize toxins in your body and contribute enormously to overall well-being.
- Cry and seek solitude when you need to.
- Seek help if you feel that life is not becoming more manageable with time.
How can I make my child feel safe when I feel so anxious all the time?

If you feel your anxiety is “spilling over” and really affecting your child’s emotions, take the responsible step and get help for yourself. Talk to friends, a religious leader, or a therapist in order to feel more in control. It’s good to openly talk about all kinds of emotions with your children, but when emotions begin to feel overwhelming and out of control, or arise unexpectedly too often, then it might be time to seek professional assistance. When children sense high anxiety in a parent, they begin to keep their emotions to themselves and/or to feel responsible for comforting the parent.

My child wants to be around me all the time, but I have to spend all day at work. How should I handle this?

Separation anxiety is a common sign that a child is feeling stress or trauma. Explore your child’s worries about what might happen during the day, making every effort to provide reassurance. Tell your child’s teacher or child-care worker about the situation, so they can “check in” with your child during the day and perhaps build in extra attention or structure. And it’s always a good idea to reinforce a child’s strengths—for example, by recalling together ways they have successfully coped with a hard situation in the past.

Some children feel better if they are carrying a cell phone, or if a regular phone call is planned. Parents can also give their children personal reminders, such as a photograph, to look at throughout the day. Finally, build in “quality time” when you are able to completely focus on your child at a regular time(s) each day or week.

At first everyone in our neighborhood came together, but now suspicions are rising again. What should we do?

Communicating and reaching out are important at moments like this. Plan a community event (picnic, or block meeting) and make sure to be inclusive. Shop and have friendly interactions in stores with Middle Eastern (for example) shopkeepers. It can also help to ask directly how various neighbors are feeling or thinking. When groups are polarized, it takes time and effort to help bring everyone together.

What can we do to help our directly affected classmates, neighbors and co-workers even now?

Be present for them. Continue to talk to them, see how they’re feeling and if they need anything. A long-term “relationship investment” can feel more helpful to someone than a few visits right after a crisis. After a death, the bereaved often feel more and more alone as time passes, since others may assume they’re “over it.”

We feel deluged by talk and shows about the events of 9/11. At the same time, we don’t want to be disrespectful of those who perished. What is an acceptable balance?

Respect has everything to do with attitude, not hours spent taking in upsetting images. Feel free to turn the radio and television off, or gracefully exit disturbing conversations. Use the time instead to have a moment of silence or another personal commemoration; this is especially important for children.
Every family needs to make plans for what might happen. This includes preparing for various disasters, making a family disaster kit and discussing home evacuation plans.

Install a smoke detector in your home, and take FEMA-recommended steps to minimize damage in the event of a flood, fire or hurricane.

Know where to meet outside your home (in case of a fire).

Know where to meet outside your neighborhood.

Know where to call to “check in” if you become separated from your family, and memorize this number.

Identify two people responsible for keeping family members informed in case of communication breakdown.

Take a first-aid class, and find out if a doctor or healthcare professionals live in your neighborhood.

Always bring your pets with you. If you must leave them, make sure they have plenty of water, food and adequate ventilation.

Store water in plastic containers (at least three gallons for each person), have non-perishable food on hand, and keep flashlights and supplies of batteries handy.

Identify guardians to care for your children if parents are no longer able.

My children have totally “moved on” and don’t seem to care or be concerned about other children who lost parents or relatives. How should I handle this?

Sometimes children’s attitudes of detachment are actually an attempt to escape from painful feelings. It is often age-appropriate behavior for children to be in their own little world. By expressing your own care and concern, you are being a great role model. Go ahead and share your feelings with your children, but don’t overwhelm them or create a sense of expectation or guilt about how they should feel.

My child never brings up the September 11, 2001, attacks or anniversary. Should I say something, or just let things be?

The problem with not saying anything is that your child could be hearing about it at school or in other settings. Depending on the age of your child, he or she may possibly be harboring worries about the event that could be put to rest through a conversation with you. Also, your child might pick up on a shift in mood within your family or from caretakers. A gentle query can help you decide whether your child would benefit from talking, or whether it would be wise just to remain present and available, always leaving the door open for interaction. (One way to do this is to ask what other children are thinking or feeling about the anniversary.) Sometimes we need to respect children’s silence as their way of protecting themselves.

Will it always be so difficult?

Generally, the pain associated with loss and crisis decreases gradually with the passage of time. As one 8-year-old said, “I used to feel a mountain of sadness in me, and now it’s just turned into a little lump.” We have to make our best effort to transcend our losses and disappointments, not only for ourselves but for our children who depend on us to convey our hope about the future.
**resources**

**books about feelings**
The following books, listed by age group, will help children deal with fear, grief and other feelings.

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**For preschool children ages 3-5**

**A Terrible Thing Happened**  
by Margaret Holmes  
Magination Press, 2000

**When Something Terrible Happens** (coloring book)  
by Marge Heegaard  
Woodland Press, 1991

**When Dinosaurs Die**  
by Laurie Krasny Brown & Marc Brown  
Little Brown & Company, 1996

**Feelings**  
by Nuria Roca & Rosa Curto  
Barron’s, 2000

**Daddy’s Climbing Tree**  
by C. S. Adler  
Clarion Books, 1993

**Dream Catcher**  
by Audrey Osofsky  
Orchard Books, 1992

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**For school-age children ages 6-10**

**The Fall of Freddie the Leaf**  
by Leo Buscaglia  
Slack Incorporated, 1982

**Everett Anderson’s Goodbye**  
by Lucille Clifton  
Holt, 1983

**The Giving Tree**  
by Shel Silverstein  
Harper & Row, 1986

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**Nightmares in the Mist**  
by Leslie McGuire  
Enchante, 1995

**Nadia the Willful**  
by Sue Alexander  
Random House, 1983

**Jessica and the Wolf:**  
*A Story for Children Who Have Bad Dreams*  
by Ted Lobby  
Magination Press, 1990

**Daddy’s Climbing Tree**  
by C. S. Adler  
Clarion Books, 1993

**Our Gandhi: Child of Fear to Man of Freedom**  
Retold by V. Mylo Schaaf  
Nilgiri Press, 2000

**The Velveteen Rabbit**  
by Marjory Williams  
Doubleday & Co.

**The Yellow Leaf**  
by Hasan Terani  
Mage Publishers Inc., 1994

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**For school-age children 11 or older**

**Chicken Soup for the Little Souls**  
by Jack Canfield, Mark Victor Hansen, and Lisa McCourt  
Health Communications, 2000

**I Will Remember You: A Guidebook Through Grief for Teens**  
by Laura Dower  
Scholastic, 2001

**Facing Change**  
by Donna O’Toole  
Compassion Books, 1995

**Don’t Despair on Thursdays:**  
*The Children’s Grief Management Book*  
by Adolph Moser  
Landmark Editions, 1995
# books about respect

The following books, listed by age group, will help children learn respect for people and other cultures. You will find Multicultural Publishers listed under Web-based resources (page 50).

### For preschool children ages 3-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Big Orange Splot</td>
<td>Daniel Manus Pinkwater</td>
<td>Scholastic, 1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Brand New Kid</td>
<td>Katie Couric</td>
<td>Doubleday, 2000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Swimmy</td>
<td>Leo Lionni</td>
<td>Knopf Press, 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>Mary Hoffman</td>
<td>Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Button Is a Sissy</td>
<td>Tomie DePaola</td>
<td>Harcourt Brace Jovanich, 1979</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Black Like Kyra, White Like Me</td>
<td>Judith Vigna</td>
<td>Albert Whitman and Company, 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sneetches and Other Stories</td>
<td>Dr. Seuss</td>
<td>Random House</td>
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<tr>
<td>From Far Away</td>
<td>Saoussan Askar et al.</td>
<td>Annick Press, 1995</td>
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### For school-age children ages 6-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Peter Spier</td>
<td>Doubleday, 1988</td>
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<tr>
<td>Swimmy</td>
<td>Leo Lionni</td>
<td>Knopf Press, 1992</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Amazing Grace</td>
<td>Mary Hoffman</td>
<td>Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Who Belongs Here</td>
<td>Margy Burns Knight</td>
<td>Tilbury House Publications, 1993</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two Leaf Friends</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Global Classroom, 1998</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Barefoot Book of Heroic Children</td>
<td>Rebecca Hazell</td>
<td>Barefoot Books, 2000</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sitti's Secrets</td>
<td>Naomi Shihab Nye</td>
<td>Four Winds Press, 1994</td>
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### For school-age children ages 11 or older

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Year</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who Belongs Here</td>
<td>Margy Burns Knight</td>
<td>Tilbury House Publications, 1993</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sounder</td>
<td>Will Armstrong</td>
<td>Harper Trophy, 1969</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosa Parks: My Story</td>
<td>Rosa Parks</td>
<td>Puffin, 1999</td>
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books about multicultural issues

Counseling the Culturally Different
by Derald Wing Sue & David Sue
John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1990

Death and Bereavement across Cultures
Ed. Colin Murray Parkes et al.
Routledge, 1996

Improving Intercultural Interactions:
Modules for Cross-cultural Training Programmes
Ed. Kenneth Cushner, Richard W. Brislin & Tomoko Yoshida
Sage, 1997

Increasing Multicultural Understanding
by Don. C. Locke
Sage, 1998

Race, Culture and Counselling
by Colin Lago & Joyce Thompson
Open University Press, 1996

Race, Culture and Difference
Ed. James Donald & Ali Rattansi
Sage, 1992

Therapy across Culture
by Inga-Britt Krause
Sage, 1998

Transcultural Counselling in Action
by Patricia d’ Ardenne & Aruna Mahtani
Sage, 1999

Unresolved Grief: A Practical,
Multicultural Approach for Health Professionals
by John C. Gunzburg
Singular Publishing Group, 1993

books available on amazon.com

The following highly rated books are excellent resources for educators.

Great Scenes from Minority Playwrights:
Seventy-Four Scenes of Cultural Diversity
Ed. Marsh Cassady
Meriwether, 1997

Yet another of Cassady’s textbook-style drama collections.
Included are selections from plays that deal with cultural issues such as race, class and gender written by multi-ethnic playwrights.

Cultural Diversity and Education:
by James A. Banks
Allyn & Bacon, 2000

A powerful new resource for leading and unifying culturally diverse organizations and communities.

The 10 Lenses: Your Guide to Living
& Working in a Multicultural World
by Mark A. Williams & Donald O. Clifton
Capital Books Inc., 2001

A tough-minded look at a potentially soft subject.

The Family Experience: A Reader in Cultural Diversity
Ed. Mark Hutter
Allyn & Bacon, 1999

A collection of readings looking at the diversity of the American family through time, taking a multicultural approach.
web-based resources

Coping.org
Tools for coping with life, including coping with the aftermath of 9/11/01. Both a resource and a place to submit materials for posting.
http://www.coping.org/911/tribute/content.htm

The Dougy Center:
The National Center for Grieving Children and Families
One of the nation's foremost resources to help children and families with grief and loss. (503) 775-5683
http://www.dougy.org

Educational Development Center's Beyond Blame:
Reacting to the Terrorist Attack, Cosponsored by the Justice Project and the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation
This free resource was designed by a team of EDC researchers and curriculum writers concerned that the terrorist attacks have created a hostile climate for Arab-Americans.
http://www.edc.org/spotlight/schools/beyondblame.htm

Educators for Social Responsibility
A variety of resources: background on Afghanistan; tips on talking to children about the tragedy and violence they are seeing on the news; and free lesson plans. They also have links to historical sites, photos, and informational handouts for students to go with lesson plans and a catalog to order additional materials.
http://www.esrnational.org/wtclessons.htm

Helping Children Cope with Tragedy
This site, hosted by the National PTA, provides a list of tips for helping children get through difficult times. It also has many useful links for dealing with issues of discrimination, grief and crisis. Many activities are outlined, especially for younger children.
http://www.pta.org/parentinvolvement/tragedy

Mercy Corps
An international relief and development organization with programs all over the world. Mercy Corps exists to alleviate suffering, poverty and oppression by helping people build secure, productive and just communities. 1-800-292-3355
http://www.mercycorps.org

Arab World and Islamic Resources (AWAIR)
This nonprofit provides educational books and audio-visuals about Arab and Islamic culture.
http://www.telegraphave.com/gui/awairproductinfo.html

Association for Library Service to Children;
American Library Association Resources for Children and Their Parents and Educators
This site includes books to help deal with issues of separation and loss.
http://www.ala.org/alsc/dealing_with_tragedy_books.html

August House
A source for storytelling guides and folk-tale anthologies. (501) 372-5450
http://www.augusthouse.com

Barefoot Books
This publisher takes its inspiration from many different cultures, focusing on themes that encourage independence of spirit, enthusiasm for learning, and acceptance of other traditions. (212) 604-0505
http://www.barefootbooks.com

Bright Horizons Family Solutions
The nation's largest provider of employer-sponsored childcare, early education, and work/life services.
http://www.brighthorizons.com

Children's Book Council
Books about trauma, tragedy, and loss, books about relationships and community-building.

Children Now and the Kaiser Family Foundation
Encourages parents to talk with their children earlier and more often about tough issues.
http://www.talkingwithkids.org
Network for Good
Online resources for making a difference, designed to help people volunteer and find opportunities to give in their own communities and beyond.
http://www.networkforgood.org

New York University Child Study Center
This site offers a wide range of helpful information for parents, basing its suggestions on state-of-the-art research.
(212) 263-6622
http://www.aboutourkids.org

Project Phoenix Anniversary
Project Phoenix offers teachers materials to help their students cope with the anniversary of 9/11.
http://ebiz.netopia.com/projectphoenix/anniversary/

Southern Poverty Law Center
Offers thoughtful lessons on a variety of subjects relevant to teaching diversity and September 11th. Click on the “September 11th and After” link. Can be searched by grade level and subject.
http://www.tolerance.org

Teaching for Change
A number of resources, including lesson plans, books and videos, and the “Scarves of Many Colors” project.
http://www.teachingforchange.org