INTRODUCTION

This guide, developed by a team of Alameda County educators and child mental health professionals, is meant to be a resource for the classroom teacher in helping children to recover from the effects of a disaster. Prepared under a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Administration to assist teachers to help children recover from the Loma Prieta earthquake of 1989, this guide will help in coping with other general disasters as well as with the mini-disasters that occur in the lives of individual children.

Disasters hit children **hard**. It's difficult for them to understand and accept that there are events in their lives that can't be controlled or predicted. Worst of all, we adults can't "fix" a disaster, can't solve it, can't keep it from happening again.

Then, what CAN a teacher do?

PLENTY!

- First and foremost, cope with your own natural feelings of helplessness, fear, anger. Until you do this, you won't be much help to the children.
- Put the disaster in context; provide a perspective. Communicate a positive "I'm not helpless" attitude.
- Start the healing process. Help the children to feel relieved and soothed.
- Identify children who may need the intervention of mental health professionals or other helpers beyond the classroom.

*In this guide, you will find ideas for all the above steps plus much more. Please use it as a resource; take what is appropriate to the class and the situation. Above all, use it!

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