



Media Contact: Greg Walsh, Walsh Public Relations
T: 203-292-6280; greg@walshpr.com

Dr. Toy's RX Helping Children Cope in the Aftermath of Hurricane Harvey (...and other disasters) Use Play & Toys to Aid Recovery©

In the aftermath of Hurricane Harvey, children need positive play and simple toys to begin their personal recovery process. That's my goal as an author, and as a professional well-known as Dr. Toy, who has dedicated more than 30 years to the study of play and playthings, and their importance for child development and learning.

Once a child has a safe environment, finding routines and ways to reduce stress are important next steps toward coping with overwhelming tragedy. Play and toys can serve a vital role in helping children deal with crisis.

As communities throughout the country reach out to the thousands of displaced families, I want to suggest some practical ways to use play and toys to help children cope with unexpected and serious disasters:

- Provide children with comfort toys like puppets, soft dolls, and teddy bears.
- Listen to them; observe them at play, as play helps release their feelings.
- Give them the opportunity to show you how they feel, often easier with the comfort of puppets and toys (but feel free to use an improvised sock puppet).
- Provide toys, such as action figures, that allow them to play out their concerns and ability to gain control.

- Play games, like checkers, Candyland, and cooperative games that allow everyone to take turns and have fun.
- Toys like Tangle toys, balls, and fidget toys help children to stay calm, relax, deal with their thoughts, and better help them cope.
- Take time to play in and outdoors in ways that help them like jumping rope, tossing a ball, or playing basketball, which can expend pent-up energy, reduce stress, and improve behavior.
- Take quiet walks, or just sit and talk together about good things to reduce tension.
- Read or make up stories that provide children with positive thoughts and experiences to help restore optimism.
- Encourage them to listen to CDs, draw pictures, watch positive themed videos, and reduce TV watching.
- Spend time playing with your child even though things are difficult. Playtime will help both of you restore balance and gain strength.
- Remember to sing together, move, stretch, dance, and, of course, hug one another. Love always helps heal. Stay safe and be positive!

© 2017 Stevanne Auerbach, PhD/Dr. Toy, San Francisco, CA

Known as Dr. Toy®, Stevanne Auerbach, PhD, is an author, consultant, and specialist in child development, education, and psychology. Her 16 books include *Smart Play/Smart Toys*, *Toys for a Lifetime*, *The Whole Child*, and *Choosing Child Care*. Dr. Toy's Guide presents her annual best toy awards program recognizing outstanding, developmentally appropriate toys and children's products. See www.drtoy.com.