

Stormbirds

Growing through natural disaster



Stormbirds is a small group wellbeing program for children and young people who have experienced a natural disaster. It provides knowledge and skills that build resilience and help in moving forward.

What does Stormbirds do?

Stormbirds supports children and young people in affected communities to adapt to experiences of change, loss and grief resulting from natural disasters. These impacts can be felt at the time of the event, and in the weeks, months and even years that follow. Stormbirds offers social and emotional learning to help children and young people make sense of what has happened, adjust to the changes, recover and move forward toward a new future.

As part of the Seasons for Growth suite of programs, Stormbirds is based on the belief that grief is a normal response to the change, loss and uncertainty that often results from natural disasters. The program enables participants to realise they are not alone in managing the impacts of the natural disaster, and supports them to develop coping, problem solving and decision making skills.

Who is Stormbirds for?

Stormbirds is suitable for children aged 6-14.

The facilitator ("Companion") consults with the school/ community about the most appropriate timing of Stormbirds delivery following a disaster (generally recommended to be 3-12 months after a disaster event).

How does Stormbirds work?

Stormbirds has two levels:

Level 1	6 - 10 years
Level 2	10 - 14 years

The program is facilitated in small groups over four (60 minute) sessions. Stormbirds is based on small-group peer-learning processes (4-7 participants with one adult Companion). This creates a safe space for children and young people to practise new ways of thinking and responding to their change and loss. The program makes use of creative activities involving art, drama and storytelling.

Each participant also receives a journal to capture their learning throughout the program.

How are groups facilitated?

Teachers, professionals and volunteers participate in a one day training workshop that is provided in communities of need following natural disasters. Adults participating in this training learn about how to facilitate Stormbirds in safe, creative ways that strengthen children's knowledge, skills and confidence to cope with the impacts of natural disaster events. The training also offers an opportunity for adults to reflect on their own experience and that of others in their community, including young people.



Program sessions

Session 1 - Change, loss and natural disasters

Children explore the idea that change is a natural part of life, while recognising that some changes are more difficult or unexpected than others. They gently reflect on some of the changes that have occurred for themselves, their families and communities as a result of the natural disaster.

Session 2 - Feelings and responses

This session provides a safe space for acknowledging feelings. Children develop their skills in accurately naming feelings and learn positive strategies for attending to these and other reactions.

Session 3 - Remembering good times and special places

Children are encouraged to find hope through happy memories they hold, which act as reminders that good times will come again. Holding the hope of these happy memories, children will learn about the importance of focusing on what they can influence rather than what they can't.

Session 4 - Growing stronger together

This session brings closure to the group. Children explore any ways the natural disaster is strengthening their communities, while acknowledging their may still be hard days ahead. They review their learning and are affirmed in their ability to practice what they've learned in their lives going forward.

Learning outcomes

Stormbirds supports young people in understanding and managing the changes they experience as a result of a natural disaster:

- **Learn** that change, loss and grief are part of life and normal to experience following a natural disaster.
- **Develop** skills to name and attend to their feelings, cope on difficult days, problem solve and make good choices.
- **Understand** that happy memories can offer a connection to special people, places, times and events, and that good times will come again.
- **Identify** small things they can do that help make a difference to themselves, their family and their community.
- **Name** people they know, places they go and things they can do when they need some extra help.

Evidence and evaluation

Stormbirds reflects key learning principles, processes and content of the Seasons for Growth suite of education programs.

Since 1996, numerous reviews and evaluations have attested that the Seasons for Growth programs offer an overwhelmingly positive experience and beneficial outcomes across a wide range of settings.

Seasons for Growth has been independently evaluated numerous times. Details of these evaluations can be viewed here:

View Evaluations

<https://www.mackillopseasons.org.au/kb-article-list/?kbc=program%20evaluations>

Contact us

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