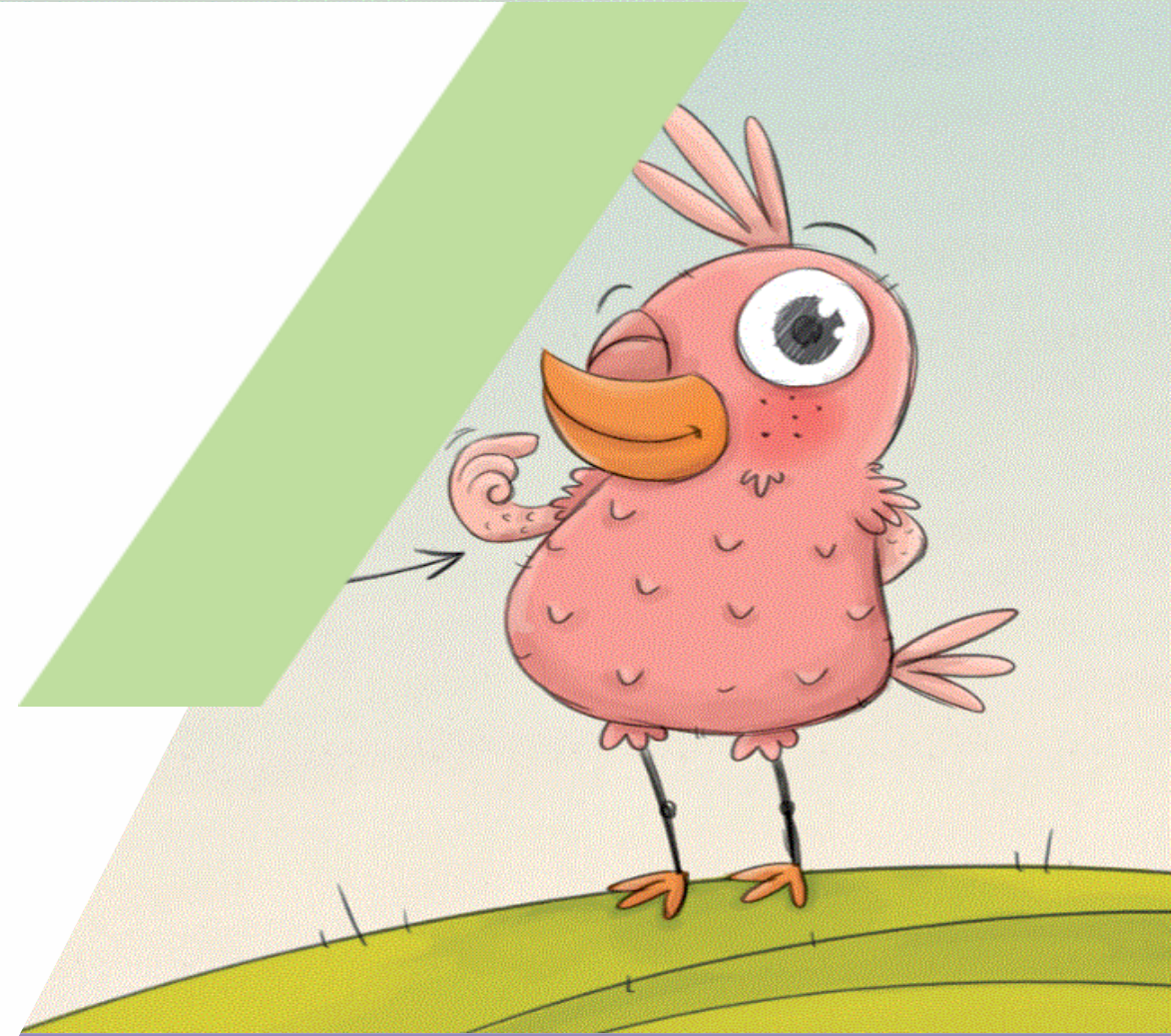


Birdies Tree: Universal Resources

Dr Andrea Baldwin
Child and Youth Clinical Consultant
Rainfall & Flooding 2021-22

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant
Mental Health
PIMH@health.qld.gov.au
Ph. (07) 3266 0300



Acknowledgement of Country

The Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health (QCPIMH) would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of all land and sea countries throughout Australia, and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge past and current sorry business, and the losses suffered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We also acknowledge that connection to land, wind and water, and culture and traditions are central to the social emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Recognition of Lived Experience



We recognise the lived experience of mental health challenges within our work teams, partners and clients. We are grateful for the lived experience expertise that informs our ongoing practice.

In particular we acknowledge those who have lived through natural hazards and disruptive events, and thank them for the insights and wisdom that help to keep our work grounded in people's real-world experiences.

Presentation outline

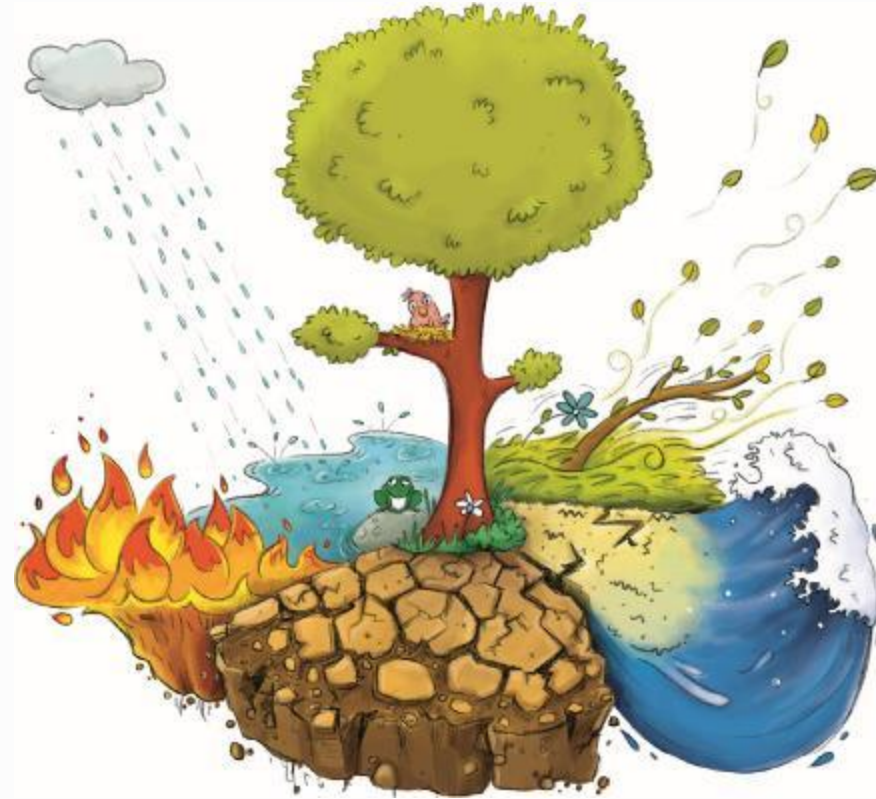
1. Birdie's Tree – context and history
2. Birdie's Tree Universal Resources
3. Birdie's Tree Early Learning Program
4. Birdie Cares



QCPIMH - Who are we? What do we do?



How did Birdie's Tree begin?





[Introducing Birdie's Tree](#)

Common reactions in babies and young children



Sadness



Sleeping problems



Increased clinginess or
separation anxiety



Emotional outbursts
or temper tantrums

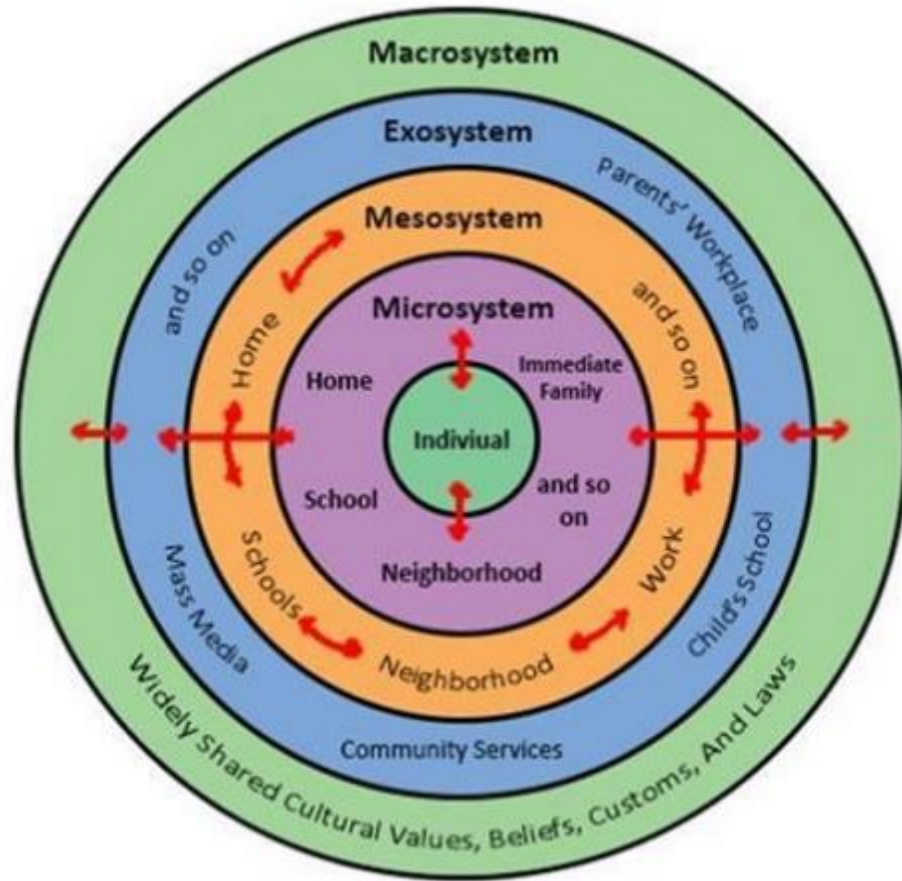


Going backwards in
previously developed skills



New or increased
fears and worries

Context of working with babies and young children



"There is no such thing as a baby ... if you set out to describe a baby, you will find you are describing a baby and someone." (Winnicott, 1947)

- Child
- Child-parent dyad
- Parental dynamics
- Family
- Childcare/School/Community
- Culture

Common reactions in parents and caregivers



Feeling irritable and being snappy towards others



Having trouble sleeping



Experiencing low motivation, mood or energy most of the time



Withdrawing from family and friends



Worrying more than usual or having difficulty controlling worry



Not enjoying the things you used to



Finding it difficult to wind down



Drinking more alcohol or using other drugs to help you relax



Risk Factors

Pre-existing

- Temperament
- Physical illness
- ACEs/trauma
- Intergenerational trauma
- MH concerns
- Poor attachment
- Female
- Genetic risk

Event-related

- Threat of life/ injury to parent
- Death of parent/s
- Threat of life/injury to self
- Separated from parent/s
- Parent distress
- Home destroyed
- Evacuated

After

- Parent-child relationship difficulties
- Parent distress
- Family stressors & dysfunction
- House disruption
- Emotion dysregulation
- Low social support

Community recovery trajectory



Thinking about disruptive events



Resilience & Posttraumatic Growth

- Stress and trauma research has traditionally focused on negative consequences of adversity.
- There's now more focus on positive outcomes, specifically posttraumatic growth (PTG) – **'positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with trauma'**.
- Emphasizes transformation, learning and growing through stressful events and circumstances.



Counteracting 'pre-conditions for trauma'

- Safety
- Connection
- Predictability – including time, sequencing, cause and effect
- Familiarity
- Age-appropriate information
- Protection from media
- Agency
- Body awareness, here and now – sensory activities
- Calm
- Hope and optimism for future, gratitude for now
- Joy and fun – pleasurable activities
- Narrative

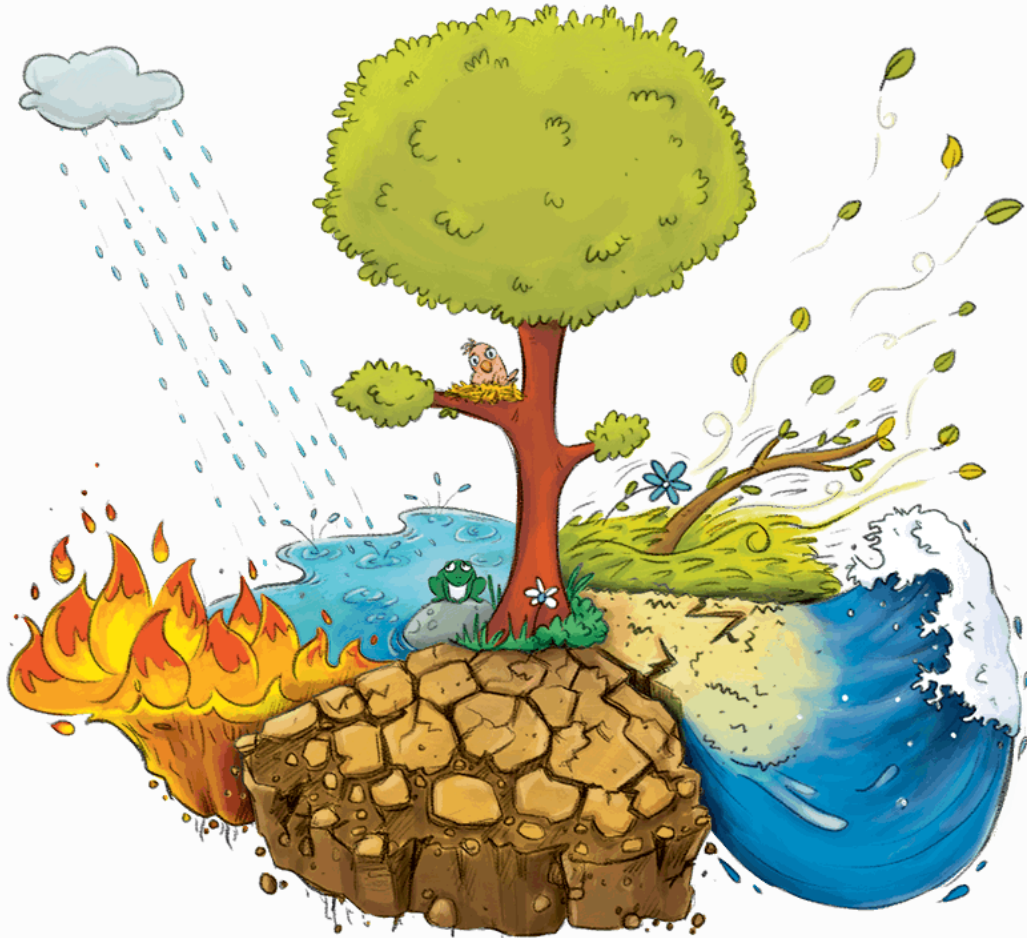


*Based on Bessel Van Der Kolk's webinar
'Seven Pre-Conditions for Trauma', April 2020*

and

*'Five essential elements of immediate and
mid-term mass trauma intervention', Hobfoll
et al. 2007*

What helps?



Talk

- Young children know more than we think - don't avoid discussion
- Provide age-appropriate information
- Increased knowledge decreases anxiety
- Don't scare – talk about what happened, what can be done, what will happen next
- Interaction + guidance = problem-focused coping

Play

- Children process emotional experiences through play
- Enable children's agency in response and recovery
- Therapeutic games can help – sense of success and mastery

Tell stories

- Language helps children grasp and share their experiences
- Therapeutic stories contain, structure and interpret emotional experiences
- Emotional literacy – words for 'big feelings'

Birdie's Tree!

<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery>



Key messages for children

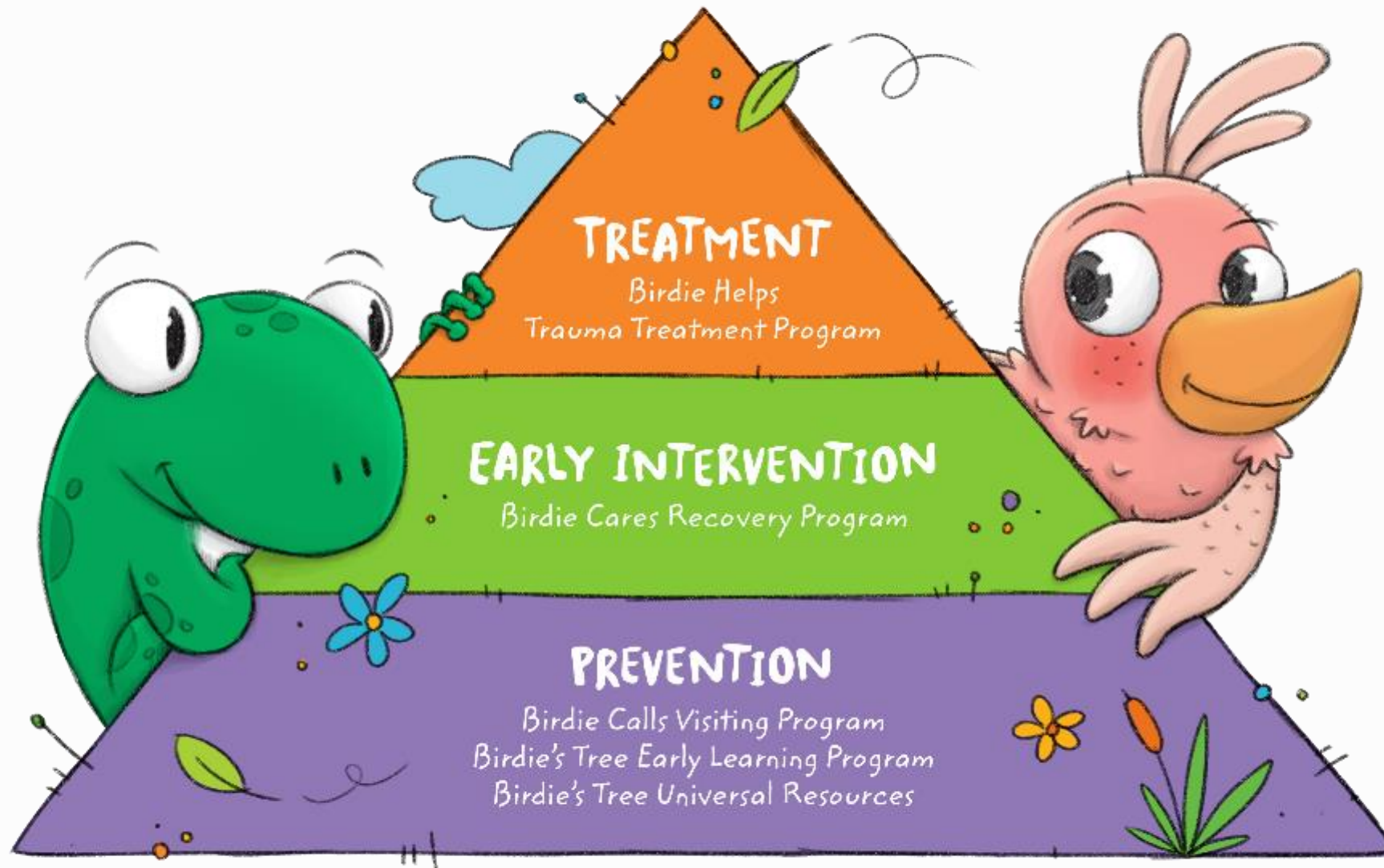


- Disruptive events are no-one's fault, and certainly not yours
- You are safe and loved
- You are not alone
- Hard times end
- Order will be restored
- Adults will take responsibility for fixing things
- It's okay to have 'big feelings' and to talk about them

Key messages for adults

- Disruptive events are not your fault
- You are not alone
- Hard times end
- Order will be restored
- It's okay to have 'big feelings' and to talk about them
- Take care of yourself, to take care of children
- Help is available – don't be afraid to ask







Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service

Birdie's Tree Growing together through natural disasters

Welcome to Birdie's Tree! Natural disasters like storms, cyclones, floods or fire can be very frightening and upsetting for babies and young children. Playing a therapeutic game or reading a story with a caring adult can help a young child work through the scary experiences and 'big feelings'. There's information for parents and carers too.

Come and meet Birdie and Mr Frog!

BIRDIE and the **FLOOD**

Take the 2022 flood survey to help young children and their families recover well after a natural disaster



[Read more](#)

Birdie's Tree Games

Information +
Resources

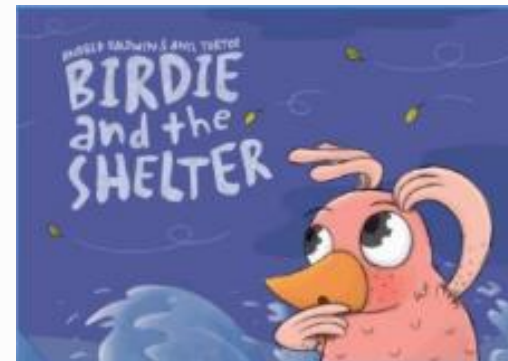
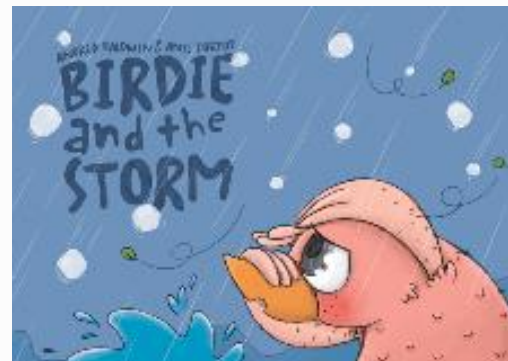
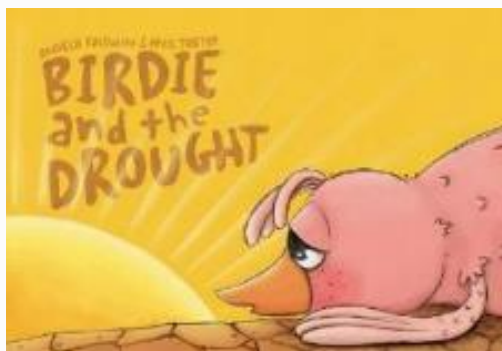
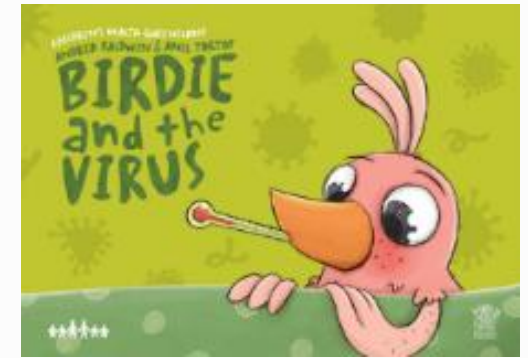
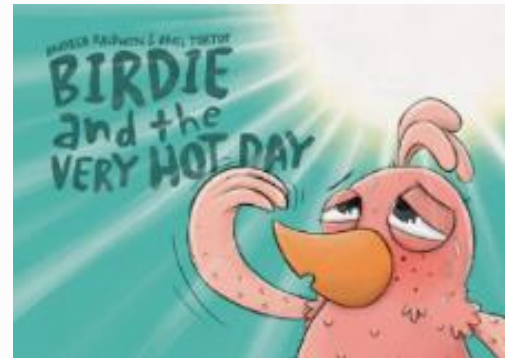
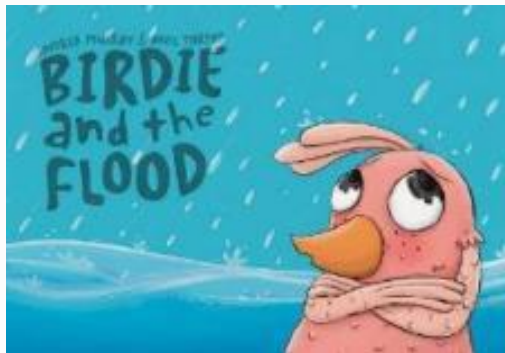
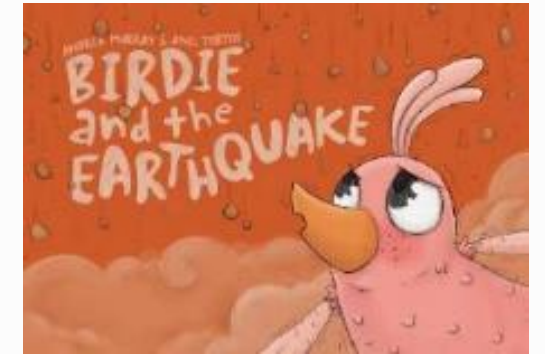
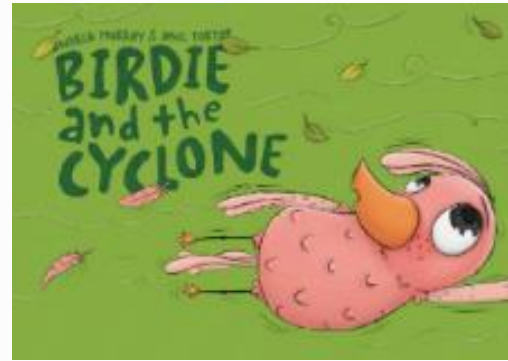
Birdie storybooks

Birdie's Tree Early
Childhood Curriculum

About Birdie's Tree



Birdie storybooks





CONVERSATIONAL READING

Conversational reading for resilience

Benefits of books



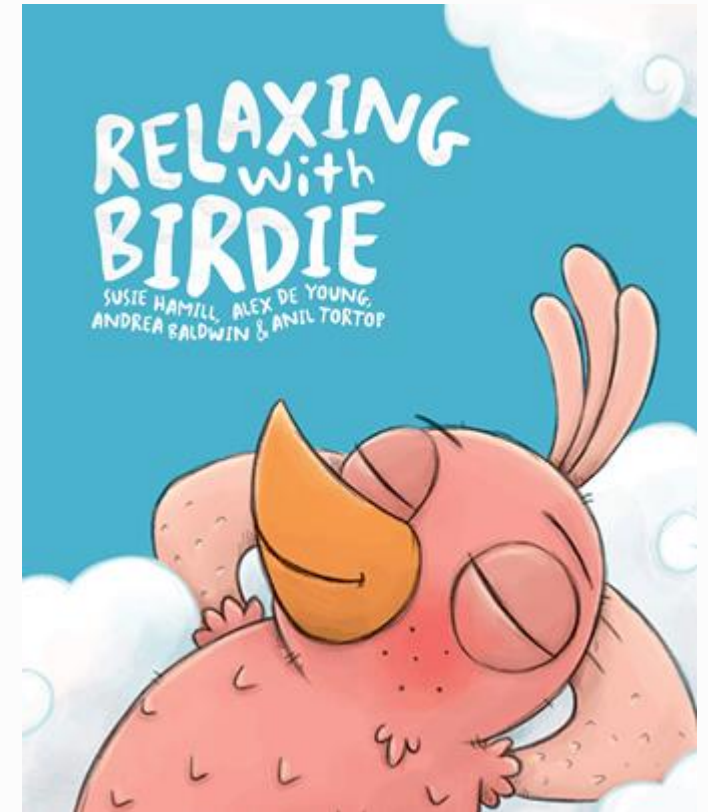
- **CONTAINMENT** – overwhelming event symbolically represented and contained
 - **NARRATIVE STRUCTURE** – beginning, middle, end; emotional arc
 - **AGENCY** – child's control of the book provides symbolic control over the event
-
- **PROCESSING** – recognise and work through events and emotions experienced in real life
 - **CONNECTION** – with characters, and with adult (reading books together)
 - **EMOTIONAL LITERACY** – shared language for 'big feelings'
 - **STEM KNOWLEDGE** – raise child's level of understanding about natural disasters, weather, emergency management (knowledge is power!)

Birdie and Mr Frog hand puppets



Relaxing With Birdie

- Mindfulness and movement routine in the form of a narrative about Birdie and Mr Frog
- Print book (cost recovery), e-book and animation freely available online
- Preparedness, Response and Recovery phases
- Help young children calm down, rest, relax and sleep
- Good for parents, educators and other adults too!





Fun With Birdie

- Activity book for babies and young children supported by parents/ carers/ educators
- Includes activities for older siblings and for children of different ages to do together
- Structured around Bessel Van der Kolk's 'preconditions for trauma' – help alleviate/ prevent trauma responses
- Response phase – while out of home or isolated, may not have access to usual toys, craft materials etc.
- Recovery phase – helps children process experiences



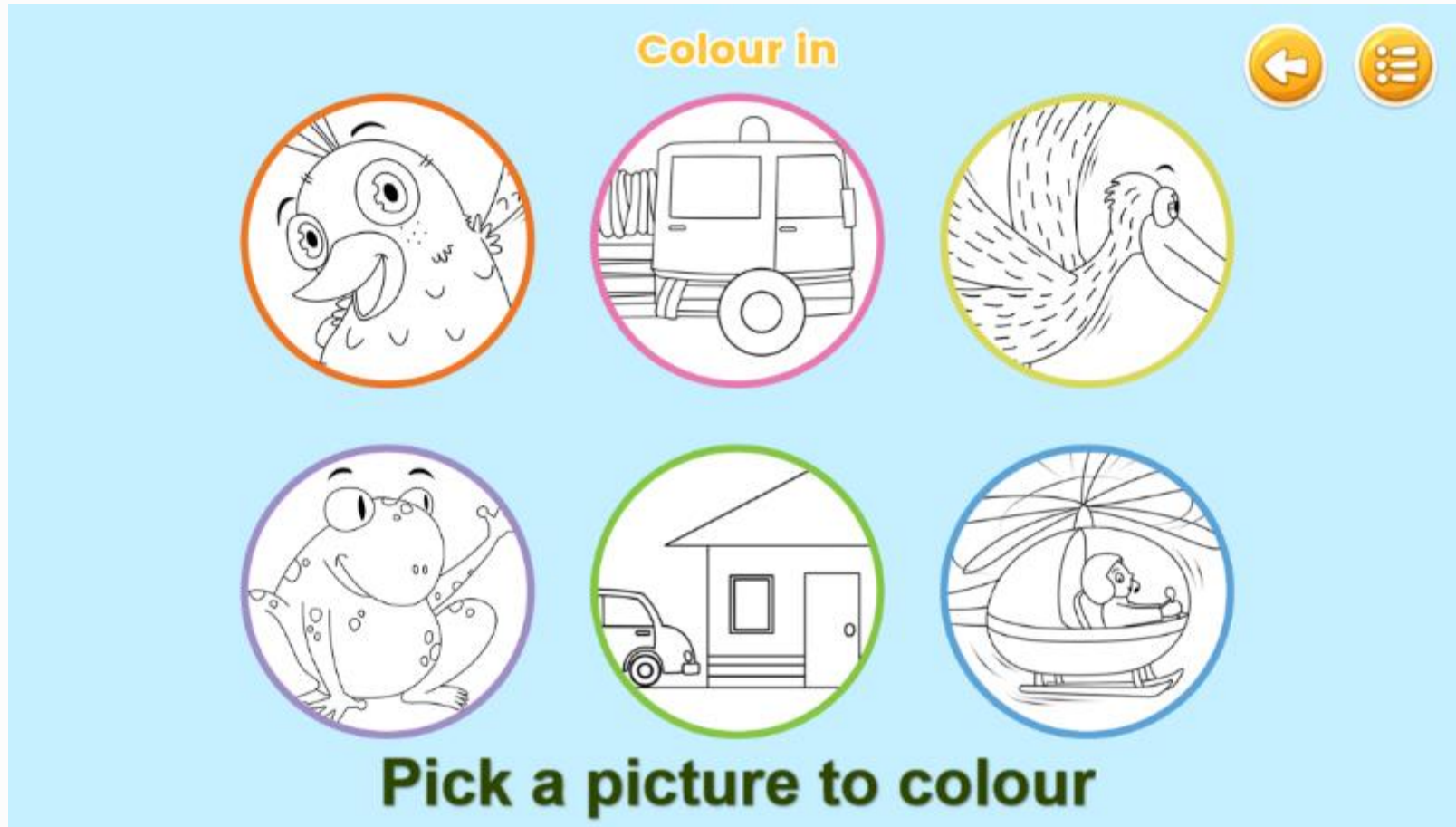
Interactive online games



Choose an activity

- 1 Colour in
- 2 Build a face
- 3 How does Birdie feel?
- 4 Singalong
- 5 Jigsaw sounds
- 6 Who helps?
- 7 Let's make it better
- 8 Dress the helper
- 9 What do helpers need

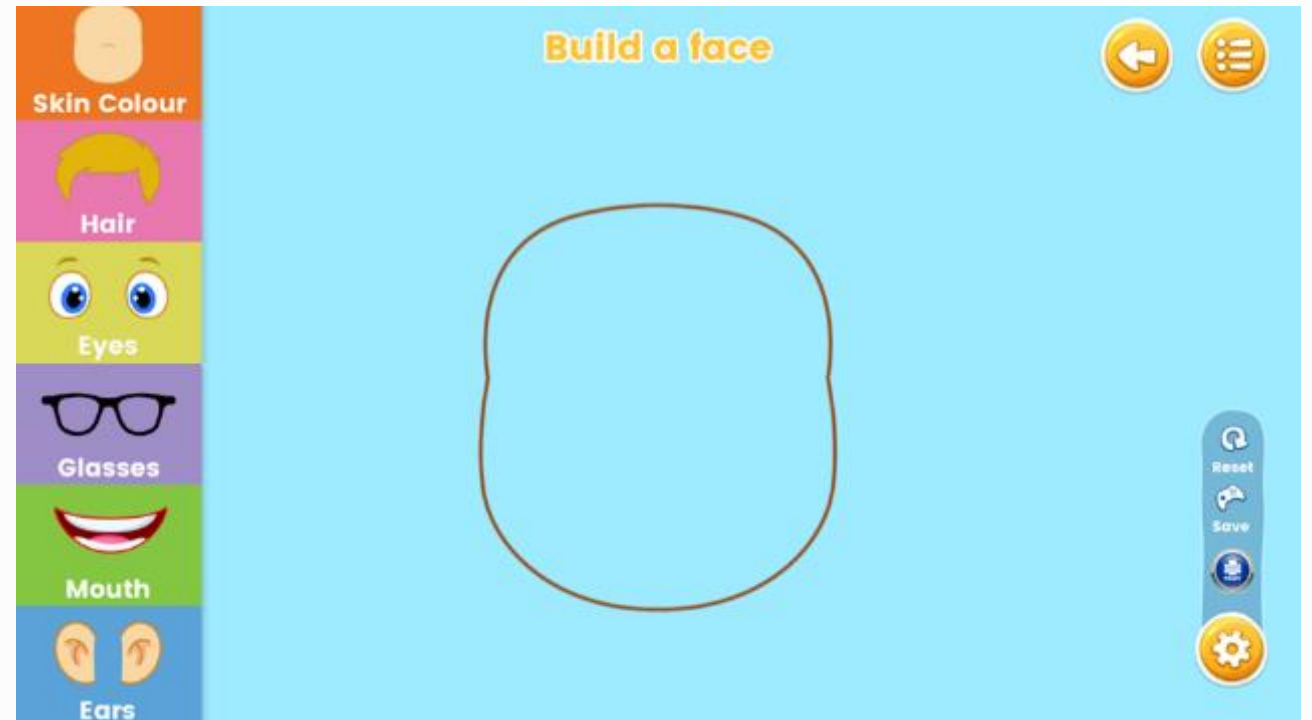
Colour in



- Exposure to potentially traumatic memories in a safe space, context of an enjoyable activity
- Exercise agency over the image of the memory (choose how to colour it in, what to add, background etc.)
- Express creativity
- Strengthen identification with story characters
- Fun

Build a face

- Explore how emotions are shown through facial expressions
- Agency and creativity
- Fun



How does Birdie feel?

- Explore emotional reactions to events – words, body language
- Strengthen identification with story characters
- Agency
- Fun





Singalong

- **This is the Sound** – exposure to potentially frightening triggers in a contained, friendly, fun context with narrative structure (and happy ending)
- **I Hear Thunder** - exposure to potentially frightening triggers in a contained, friendly, fun context with narrative structure
- **Galumph Went the Little Green Frog** – encourage curiosity about natural world, strengthen identification with characters, fun with sounds and dance
- **If You're Happy and You Know It** – explore emotional expression and coping strategies
- **Incy Wincy Spider** – encourage resilience in face of challenges
- **Twinkle Twinkle Little Star** – encourage curiosity about natural world
- **Two Little Dickie Birds** – play symbolically with loss and restoration

Jigsaw sounds

Jigsaw Sounds



What kind of sound does it make?

Loud Soft Happy Scary

Next

- Discriminating between loud and soft sounds
- Exploring emotional attributions to sounds – ‘loud’ need not be ‘scary’
- Exposure to potentially triggering stimuli in safe, contained environment where child has agency (child chooses whether or not to complete jigsaw, and sound occurs as a reward)
- Fun

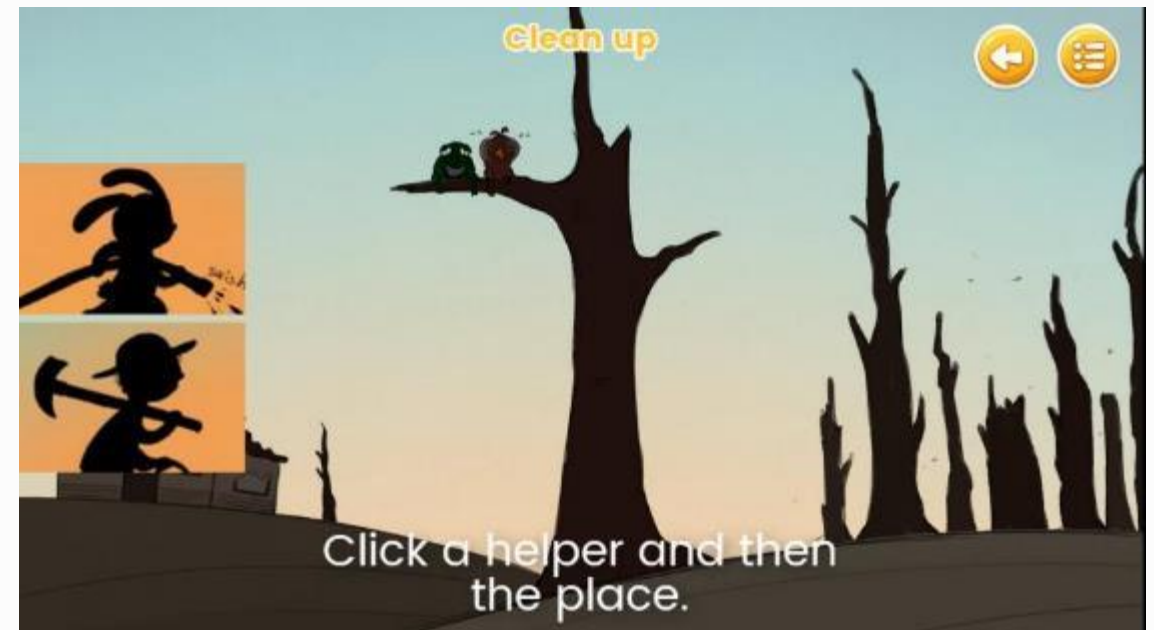
Who helps?

- Explore how helpers assist in emergency situations
- Reinforce understanding that adults are there to help and can be relied on
- Agency
- Fun



Let's make it better

- Symbolic restoration provides agency for child who may not be able to help in the 'real-world' clean-up
- Reinforce understanding that adults will help and restore order
- Reinforce hope for a better future (broken things can be fixed)
- Agency
- Fun



Dress the helper

- Demystify Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) of helping professionals
- Reinforce understanding that adults will help and restore order
- Agency
- Fun



What do helpers need?



- Demystify Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) of helping professionals
- Reinforce understanding that adults will help and restore order
- Agency
- Fun

Information and activity sheets

- Hazard-specific
- Downloadable PDFs
- Double-sided hand-out
- Minimal information
- Short version of story
- More to come!

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Growing together through natural disasters - Flood

Information and activity sheet for families with babies and young children



When natural disasters happen, nearly everyone has some emotional response, whether they're affected directly or indirectly.

People of all ages from infants to adults may experience thoughts, feelings, physical reactions or behaviours that are intense, confusing and frightening.

Little people manage their feelings through their relationships with parents and other caring adults.

It's important to look after your own emotional wellbeing so you can stay calm and support your child.

If your child doesn't seem to 'be themselves', think about what their behaviour may be telling you. They may need more reassurance and connection with you. Sometimes they might need more support from their teacher or educator, doctor or child health nurse, or another professional.

In times of stress, babies and young children may

- become worried, but may not have the words to tell you
- be clingy or whiny, cry, seem more helpless or emotional
- have tantrums or become aggressive
- eat less or more than usual
- have trouble sleeping, have nightmares, or seem more tired than usual
- want to be closer to their parents or carers, needing more cuddles

Parents and carers can

- read the story over the page with your child and talk about the pictures
- name your child's feelings, for example, "You seem to be feeling sad"
- spend time each day having fun with your child, for example blowing bubbles, playing games, reading stories
- make sure your child's favourite toy or blanket is always handy for comfort

answer questions honestly in language your child can understand, but don't give more information than they need

- maintain regular routines like meal times, bath time, getting up time
- limit your child's exposure to media about the event (TV, radio, newspapers, online)
- keep adult conversations about the event away from babies and young children

Get others help

- talk with your child's other carers, such as kindy teachers, about how your child is feeling
- stay in contact with friends, family and other parents by video-chat and phone if not in person
- do things that are good for you, to look after yourself physically, socially and emotionally

If you or your family are finding it difficult to cope, professional help is available.



Where to get help

- Your doctor or child health nurse
- 1300HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
- Lifeline (24/7) 131 456
- Beyond Blue Info Line 1300 224 634



Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Birdie and the Flood



One day Birdie felt raindrops on her head. The rain got harder and harder. Soon there was water all over the roads and in people's houses. It was a flood!

When the water went away, there was mud and rubbish everywhere. Birdie felt sad.



Helpers came and cleaned up all the rubbish. They hosed away all the mud.

Birdie felt safe and happy again.

Read the full version of Birdie and the Flood, watch the animation, play games and get more information on the Birdie's Tree website. Browse 'Birdie's Tree'

Birdie's Tree - Growing together through natural disasters | CHQ (health.qld.gov.au)

Contact us

- 31 Robinson Road | North Brisbane QLD 4000
- 40 3400 4300
- www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-rc-rcwv/



Information sheets

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering together after a natural disaster

Supporting families in pregnancy and early parenthood

Disasters affect people in different ways. Each family member may react differently to the same event. These reactions can be severe, and are usually worst during or straight after the disaster. In most cases, reactions fade over time.

Common reactions to disasters include:

- feeling numb and detached, or overwhelmed
- feeling tearful, sad or guilty
- feeling anxious or irritable
- feeling jumpy, restless and unable to focus
- feeling unable to plan ahead
- changes in sleep or appetite
- troubling memories or bad dreams
- constant questioning and distressed thoughts
- 'reliving' the event.

Things you can do to recover:

- have reasonable expectations
- break tasks down into small, manageable steps
- take time to relax by doing something you enjoy
- do something fun with your baby
- try to get enough sleep or rest
- communicate and connect with others
- think about your baby's needs
- look towards the future
- seek help if necessary.

Looking after yourself helps you look after your baby

Always seek professional help, if you or a family member experiences any of the following:

- the above symptoms continue for longer than one month and affect your day-to-day functioning
- feelings of hopelessness or lack of interest in the future
- avoiding things that bring back memories of what happened
- being fearful, nervous or panicky (racing heart, startling easily, dizziness, shortness of breath)
- lack of energy and ongoing tiredness or numbness
- lack of enjoyment from things that you usually enjoy
- having trouble relating to and caring for your baby
- feeling guilty
- wanting to harm yourself or your baby, or thinking about ending your life.



Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering together after a natural disaster

Supporting families with babies and young children

Stress caused by disasters can make babies and young children feel unsafe and insecure. Without help, they may continue to suffer stress from the disaster, which can affect their long-term emotional wellbeing. Babies and young children manage their feelings through relationships with parents and other caring adults. Strong relationships help babies and young children recover from disasters.

Common physical and emotional reactions of babies and young children when distressed include:

- being clingy, whingey, whiney or unsettled – crying more
- seeming fearful, especially when parents are not present
- being more withdrawn, less responsive to parents and/or others
- eating less or more than usual
- having difficulty sleeping
- being hard to settle and soothe.

Young children may also:

- be more easily frustrated and have more tantrums
- be more aggressive
- act out scary events in their play
- have nightmares
- lose previous skills or 'go backwards' e.g. toileting, walking, talking

If your baby or young child continues to experience any of the above symptoms and this causes you difficulty or concern, speak to a health professional.

Things you can do to help your baby or child:

- spend time with them to help them feel safe
- re-establish regular routines as soon as possible
- play with your child – choose activities they enjoy like bubbles, play dough, reading, singing and dancing
- have fun together
- communicate with others who support your child
- help your child feel understood by labelling their feelings
- limit their exposure to TV and radio reporting on the disaster
- look after yourself.





Booklets

Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering together after a natural disaster
Supporting families in pregnancy and early parenthood





Queensland Government





Children's Health Queensland Hospital and Health Service
Child and Youth Mental Health Service

Queensland Centre for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health

Recovering together after a natural disaster
Supporting families with babies and young children




Queensland Government



Other print resources



BOOKS ABOUT...

Grief and loss

The books in this brochure may help parents and caregivers support young children going through grief or loss.

As you read these books with the child, notice their reactions. Depending on their age they may:

- look at particular pictures
- point to things that interest them
- want to talk about how the book relates to their own experience

If the child doesn't want to read the story, it may be too close to their own experience and hard to face. Put the book aside in a place where the child can explore it in their own time. Children sometimes request the same book over and over. Repeated helps them make sense of new ideas. Hearing the same story again and again can be very comforting. Not every book is for every child, it's always a good idea to read a book yourself before reading it to a child.

The goodbye book
by Todd Parr, 2015
Through the lens of a puppy who has lost his favourite person, Todd Parr tells a story about saying goodbye.
Age range: 4-8 years
ISBN: 076516404355

The memory train
by Gita Trehan, 2014
A beautiful and heartwarming picture book that tells about what a loved one did.
Age range: 0-5 years
ISBN: 076516404355

The little blessing
by Patrice Kestel, 2008
Diversity, education, therapy, and social workers all have declared the coming of all kinds of oppression: Ageism, sex, and grief.
ISBN: 076516404355

Something very good happened
by Dennis Zuker, 2016
Something very good happened to two very young children, students of course.
ISBN: 076516404355

The little book
by Patrice Kestel, 2007
The good story of a little boy who is the first to be born.
Age range: 4-8 years
ISBN: 076516404355

The goodbye book
by Todd Parr, 2015
ISBN: 076516404355

Into you
by Pat Thomas, 2011
This reassuring picture book explains the child's loss of a loved one.
Age range: 4-8 years
ISBN: 076516404355

Feathers
by Aaron Marchio, 2010
A young boy's mother has died. Simple reminders of her presence.
Age range: 3-6 years
ISBN: 076516404355

It's hard coming back to a friend
by Dea Barber, 2012
A young boy's father has died. This book explains death in simple terms.
Age range: 3-6 years
ISBN: 076516404355

In my heart is a book of feelings
by La Wylie, 2014
This book helps young children recognize and talk about their emotions.
Age range: 3-6 years
ISBN: 076516404355

Yarning with jarjums about weather after a storm, cyclone or flood

Jarjums who've been through storms, floods or a cyclone may worry the same event will happen again. They can get nervous when:

- the sky clouds over
- wind starts to blow
- there's thunder or lightning
- rain starts falling
- weather forecasters and other adults talk about rain, wind or storms



Sometimes yes, more severe weather is on its way. But often it's just normal rain.

Stay calm and positive

You might be feeling worried yourself. Do whatever you need to do, to feel safe and stay calm.

Give positive cues

Jarjums look to you for clues about how to feel. They're asking, 'How worried should I be?' Use your face, voice, body and behaviour to show, 'We're safe and we'll be okay.'



Help children feel safe

- Have a cuddle
- Read a story together
- Play a game that helps children feel connected with you and each other
- Don't talk too much about the weather - a few facts, then move on to something fun

Remind children they're not alone

- 'Who helped you in the last flood? What did they do to help?'
- Ask, 'If we get a lot of water again, who'll take care of you?' (e.g. 'At kindy there's me, Miss Alex and the other teachers. At home there's Mum, Dad,' etc.)

Help children feel some power and control in relation to weather

- 'Let's check the weather forecast to see what's happening'. Go to the Bureau of Meteorology website on a tablet, computer or phone. Help children understand in simple terms what the radar shows, how much rain is expected, how long it's likely to last.



Other resources and supports

Resources

- + [Birdie's Tree](#)
- + [Information sheets](#)
- + [Booklets](#)
- + [Links for parents](#)
- + [Links for children and young people](#)
- + [Links for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families](#)

Further support

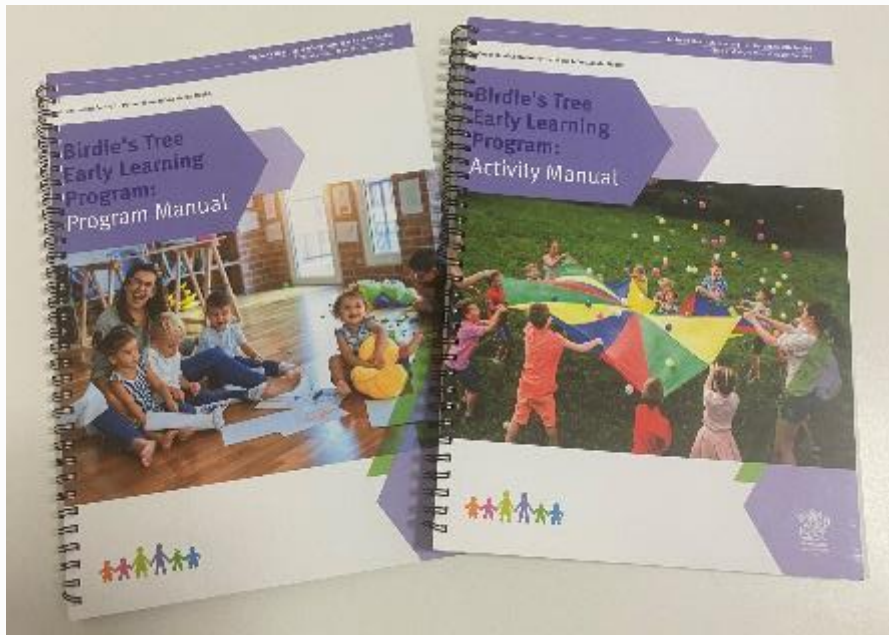
- + [General](#)
- + [Adults](#)
- + [Children](#)

- Resources to support the use of Birdie's Tree books and materials
- Information sheets (brief)
- Booklets (more comprehensive)
- Videos and animations:
 - ✓ Introduction to Birdie's Tree
 - ✓ Conversational reading
 - ✓ Babies, young children and stressful events
- Links to other resources and supports

Birdie's Tree Early Learning Program

Support Early Childhood Educators to:

- identify and respond to needs of young children and their families during and following a natural disaster
- identify when a child is in need of referral for additional support, and use appropriate referral pathways
- feel confident supporting young children's social emotional wellbeing in relation to a natural disaster
- use self-care strategies to maintain own wellbeing following a natural disaster



Birdie Cares Early Intervention Program



- Relevant Birdie storybook(s)
- Birdie or Mr Frog toy
- Relaxing with Birdie mindful movement
- Fun with Birdie activities
- Psychoeducation for parents/carers (involve all relevant family members/ care network)
- Parent/carer workbook
- Supportive counselling and reassurance
- Tipsheets for specific issues e.g. sleep
- Child workbook (if age-appropriate)
- 'My Story' narrative therapy

Are you concerned about a little person's emotional recovery?



- Birdie Cares: brief family therapy for young children (under 5) needing extra support to recover from the 2022 floods.
- QCPIMH psychologists offer Birdie Cares face-to-face or by telehealth.
- Parents and carers can contact us directly via the QR code below
- Talk with our team for further information: birdies-tree@health.qld.gov.au or phone (07) 3266 0300



Young child wellbeing check

YOUNG CHILD WELLBEING CHECK: 2022 FLOODS

These questions are designed to help parents and caregivers reflect on their child's emotional and behavioural responses to the 2022 flood events.

In the past 7 days:

- My child seemed scared or fearful
- My child seemed worried
- My child seemed nervous
- My child seemed tense
- My child was fearful or worried when out in public
- My child seemed fearful or worried at daycare, school, or other familiar settings
- My child was inconsolable when separating from me or other parent in a familiar setting



Wellbeing Check cont.

Below is a list of problems that young children sometimes have in response to a frightening or stressful experience.

We want to know whether the behaviours below began or got worse AFTER the 2022 floods.

In the past month:

- My child had bad dreams or woke up scared
- My child got upset when they were reminded of the event (e.g., saw, felt, heard, smelt)
- My child tried to avoid any reminders of the event (e.g., places, people, things, conversations)
- My child had difficulty falling or staying asleep
- My child became angry quickly, had explosive temper tantrums or was aggressive
- My child had difficulties concentrating
- My child seemed cautious and on the lookout for potential danger
- My child was clingy and had difficulties separating from me or another caregiver
- My child stopped or went backwards with things they could do before the event (e.g., talking, toileting skills, feeding self, needed dummy or bottle again)

If you or a child's parent or caregiver have observed these kinds of changes, please encourage the parent or caregiver to complete the Young Child Emotional Wellbeing Check: 2022

Birdie Cares – 'My Story'



CHAPTER 1 THIS IS ME

My name is _____
I am _____ years old

Here is a picture of me where I am right now

I am loved by
My mum
My dad
My grandma
My grandpa
My friends

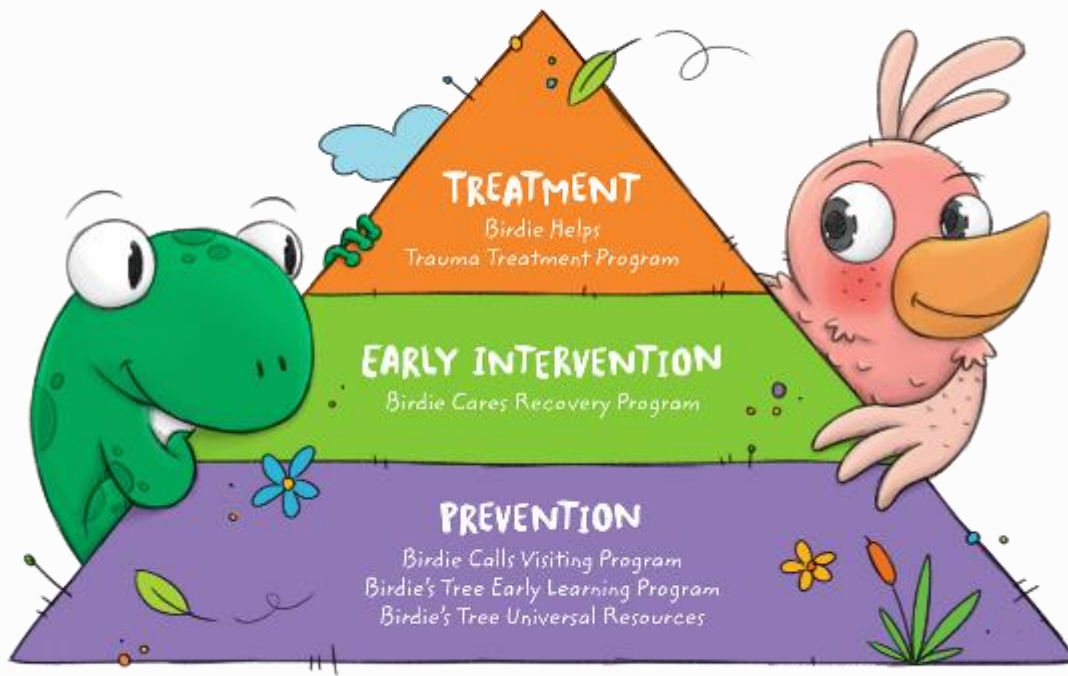
My favourite things to do are
Swimming
Reading
Playing football
Watching TV

I am good at
Drawing
Singing
Dancing
Reading
Writing
Drawing

I don't like
I don't like
I don't like
I don't like



Birdie Helps trauma treatment program



- Extend on Birdie Cares
- Address other issues contributing to trauma e.g. past trauma, ACEs, other family stressors
- May require long-term engagement
- Program in development
- Currently, referral to existing infant/ child and youth mental health services and/or psychosocial supports

Recent recognition



Birdie's Tree universal resources –
Resilient Australia Award 2020, Australian Institute
for Disaster Resilience



'Birdie and the Virus' – Queensland
Premier's Award for Excellence,
'Give all our children a great start'



Birdie's Tree initiative - Runner up, Queensland Health
Awards for Excellence – Health promotion 2021

South West HHS Birdie Calls Roadshow – State and National
Winner, Resilient Australia Awards, Mental Health category 2022

<https://www.childrens.health.qld.gov.au/natural-disaster-recovery/>
bit.ly/birdiestree or browse 'Birdie's Tree'



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