

# Here for Each Other

HELPING FAMILIES THROUGH EMERGENCIES

# Floods



## Family Guide

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND:

- ♥ Tips and Strategies on Recovery and Building Resilience
- ✎ Activity Pages for Children

# Here for Each Other

HELPING FAMILIES THROUGH EMERGENCIES

A creation of



**Sesame Workshop** is the global nonprofit behind *Sesame Street* and so much more. For over 50 years, we have worked at the intersection of education, media, and research, creating joyful experiences that enrich minds and expand hearts, all in service of empowering each generation to build a better world. Our beloved characters, iconic shows, and outreach in communities bring playful early learning to families in more than 190 countries and advance our mission to help children everywhere grow smarter, stronger, and kinder.

Learn more at [sesame.org](https://sesame.org) and follow Sesame Workshop on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#).

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# You have each other.

Floods can be scary, messy, and sometimes long-lasting. They may make it hard to go back to your home or daily routines right away. But no matter where you are, your love and calm presence help your child feel safe.

Children feel more secure when they understand what happened and what's coming next. This guide offers simple ways to comfort and support your child after a flood—through play, talking, and spending time together.

We hope some of these ideas can help you create a warm and soothing environment that will allow both you and your child to look toward sunnier days to come. And remember, you are not alone. We are here for each other!

## ANSWERING CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS: WHAT HAPPENED?

There was a flood. Floods happen when there is too much rain and water rises onto land, sometimes very quickly. Floods can cause damage and leave behind water that may not be safe.

You might feel scared or unsure. What matters most is that we are together now, and we're doing what we need to do to stay safe.

## SAFETY FIRST

- » Keep away from floodwater—it can carry germs, sewage, or sharp objects that are unsafe to touch.
- » Always wear shoes outside and avoid puddles or mud.
- » Don't touch anything electrical or plugged in if it's wet.
- » If the power is out, use flashlights or battery-powered lights, not candles.
- » If you hear about a boil water advisory, use bottled or disinfected water for drinking, cooking, or brushing teeth.
- » Keep in touch with family, friends, and neighbors to let them know you are safe.
- » Stay informed about what is happening. Follow officials' recommendations and don't return to buildings or homes until emergency workers tell you it's safe.

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## Comfort and Reassurance

Your caring presence goes a long way in helping your child feel safe, even when dealing with the challenges and uncertainty that may follow a flood. Here are some simple ways to help your child feel secure and supported.

### Provide Comfort

Assure your children that they are safe and loved. Let them know that you will take care of them, so hold hands and snuggle often. Holding a comfort item, like a blanket or toy, may also help especially if you are not yet able to return home. Lean into your relationships with trusted friends and neighbors around you: "see how our community is getting through this together!"

### Model Healthy Ways of Coping

After a flood, children look to the adults around them to see how they should feel and react. As much as possible, try to stay calm, encourage children to talk about their feelings, and surround them with positive conversations and activities. This also means taking care of yourself! You might make space for your own need to cope and process by talking to a trusted friend or family member.

### Try to Keep One Routine

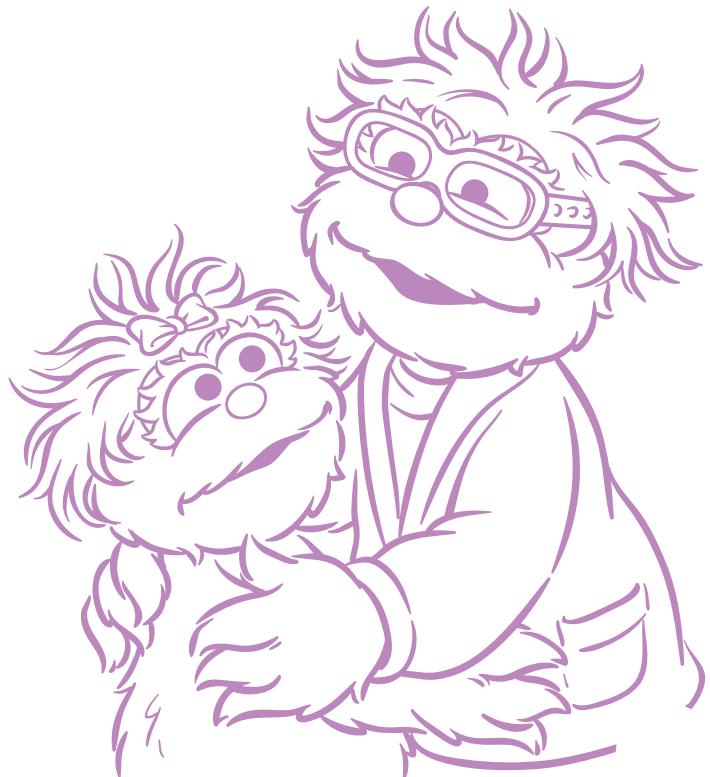
There is comfort in the familiar. Choose at least one routine that you can keep even if your situation or location changes. Simple activities that your child can look forward to each day can give them a sense of control, such as extra cuddles every morning or the same lullaby every night.

### Answer Questions

Children may ask you a lot of questions after a flood and providing them with clear and honest answers will go a long way towards helping them feel safe. Especially if you are living somewhere new for a while, children may need to be reminded and reassured often.

### Monitor the Media

Avoid your child seeing repeated images of the flood and its damage as young children may think the event is happening over and over, in real time. If you think your child might have seen or heard something, at home or at school, ask them about it. Correct inaccurate information while validating their thoughts and emotions about what they have experienced.



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## Watch and Listen

It is common for children to show signs of stress or behavior change immediately after a disaster. If changes in behavior persist, appear much later, or affect your child's everyday life, you might seek additional support. Below are some common reactions and helpful ways to respond.

### Looking for Signs of Stress

**If you observe** unusual clinging or fear of being alone...

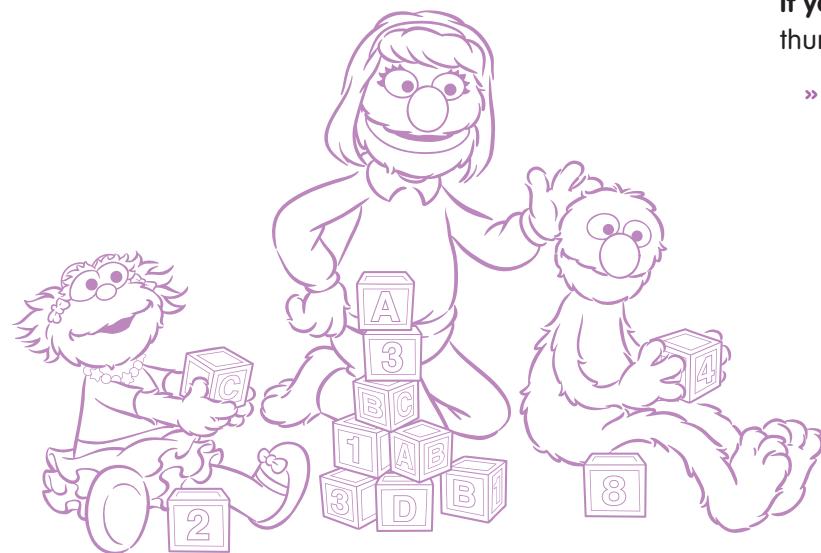
- » **try to** use gentle words and reassure them that you will keep them safe. Offer a comfort item like a toy or blanket. If they are fearful of separating, remind them that you always come back and let them know when you will return.

**If you observe** fear that the flood will happen again...

- » **try to** keep your child away from the news or other reminders of the flood. Remind them that they are safe with you.

**If you observe** fear around reminders of the flood like thunder, rain, or bathwater...

- » **try to** let children know that you understand why reminders of the flood might feel scary, and gently reassure them that they are safe with you.



**If you observe** trouble sleeping...

- » **try to** keep a consistent routine to provide comfort. Read a favorite story or sing a favorite song each night.

**If you observe** your child is less open or verbal...

- » **try to** ask how they are feeling and provide an opportunity for discussion or for them to ask questions. Also, offer other ways for them to express themselves, such as drawing.

**If you observe** more frequent outbursts and meltdowns...

- » **try to** describe their feelings with words, such as angry, sad, scared, or worried. Provide an outlet like jumping, walking, or play that engages children's senses, like feeling different textures. Keeping routines can also help prevent meltdowns.

**If you observe** more (or a return to) wetting the bed, thumb-sucking, or baby talk...

- » **try to** remind children of your comforting and safe presence by showing some extra love and affection. These are normal behaviors after a stressful event and will likely fade with time.

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## Questions and Answers

After a flood, it's okay if your child has lots of questions—or only a few. Let them ask at their own pace and try to answer honestly and calmly. The following are some common questions after any disaster, and comforting ways to respond:

### What Happened?

There was a flood. A lot of water came very fast, and it made things messy and unsafe for a little while. But now the water is going away, helpers are working to fix things in our community, and we're doing what we need to do to stay safe.

### Will We Be Okay?

Yes, we will be okay. Helpers are working to clean up, fix things, and make the community safe again.

### Why Did This Happen? Did We Do Something Bad?

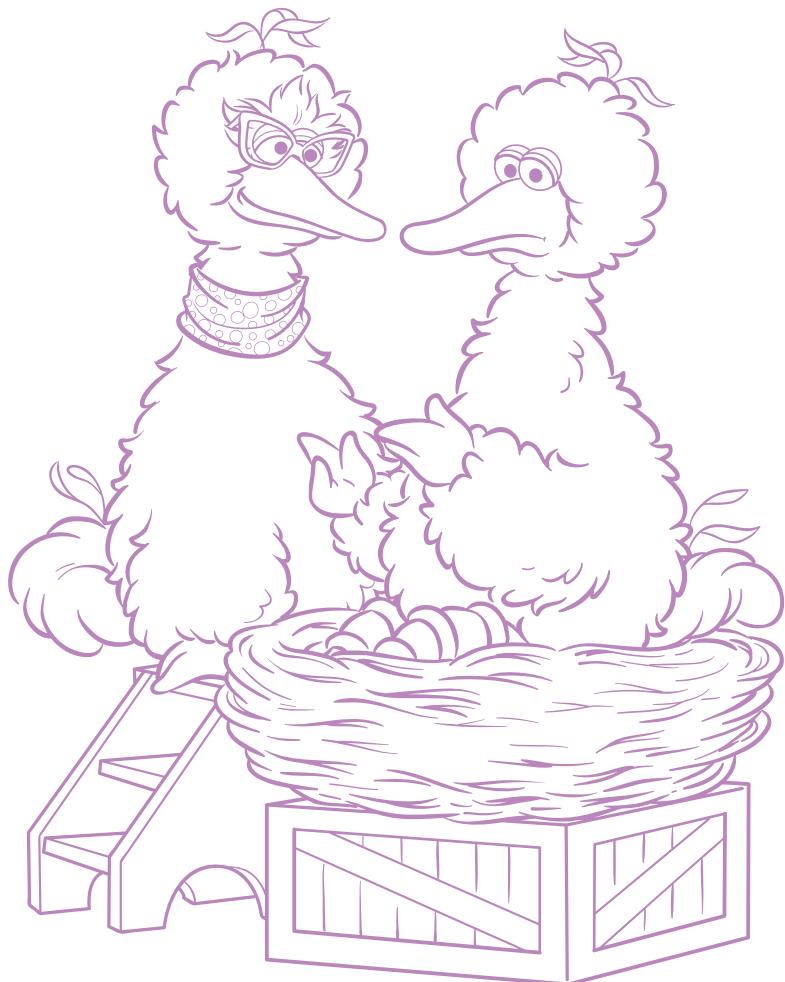
No, we didn't do anything wrong. Floods happen because of heavy rain—not because of anything we did. Sometimes things happen that are out of our control, but we will get through it together.

### Who Will Take Care of Me?

I will take care of you. I'm going to do everything I can to make sure you have what you need. And there are lots of other people who can help too like neighbors, doctors, teachers, and emergency helpers.

### When Can We Go Home?

We have to wait until special helpers tell us it's safe and dry. We might not know for sure yet, but what I do know is that we are still a family and that home is wherever we are together.



**There are questions you may not have an answer to.** It's okay to be honest and say, "I don't know. But what I do know is that I love you and I'm going to keep you safe."

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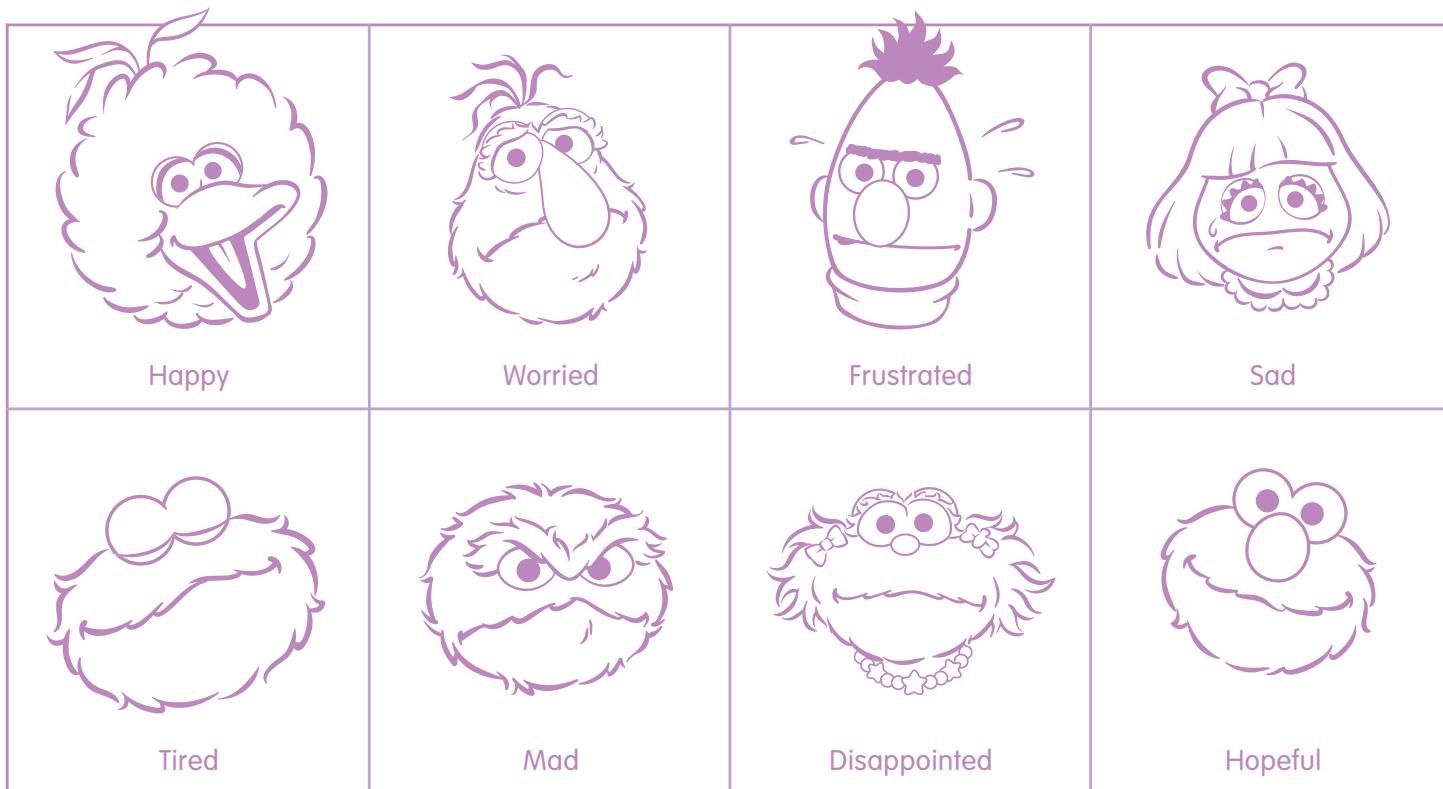
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## Big Feelings

During and after a flood, children may have some big feelings that come and go in waves. Especially if you're staying somewhere else or missing favorite things, your child may feel sad, confused, or homesick. You can help by giving children words to name their emotions and by asking questions that encourage them to open up. Let them know that these feelings are normal and that it's okay to talk about their feelings.

### How Do You Feel?

Show your children these feelings faces, and ask them to point to one that matches how they're feeling. You might say, "I see you're pointing to the frustrated face. Why do you feel frustrated?"



**Some children may talk about their feelings; others may express themselves through art or play.** This gives children a variety of ways to share their thoughts and feelings with you, even if it's without words.

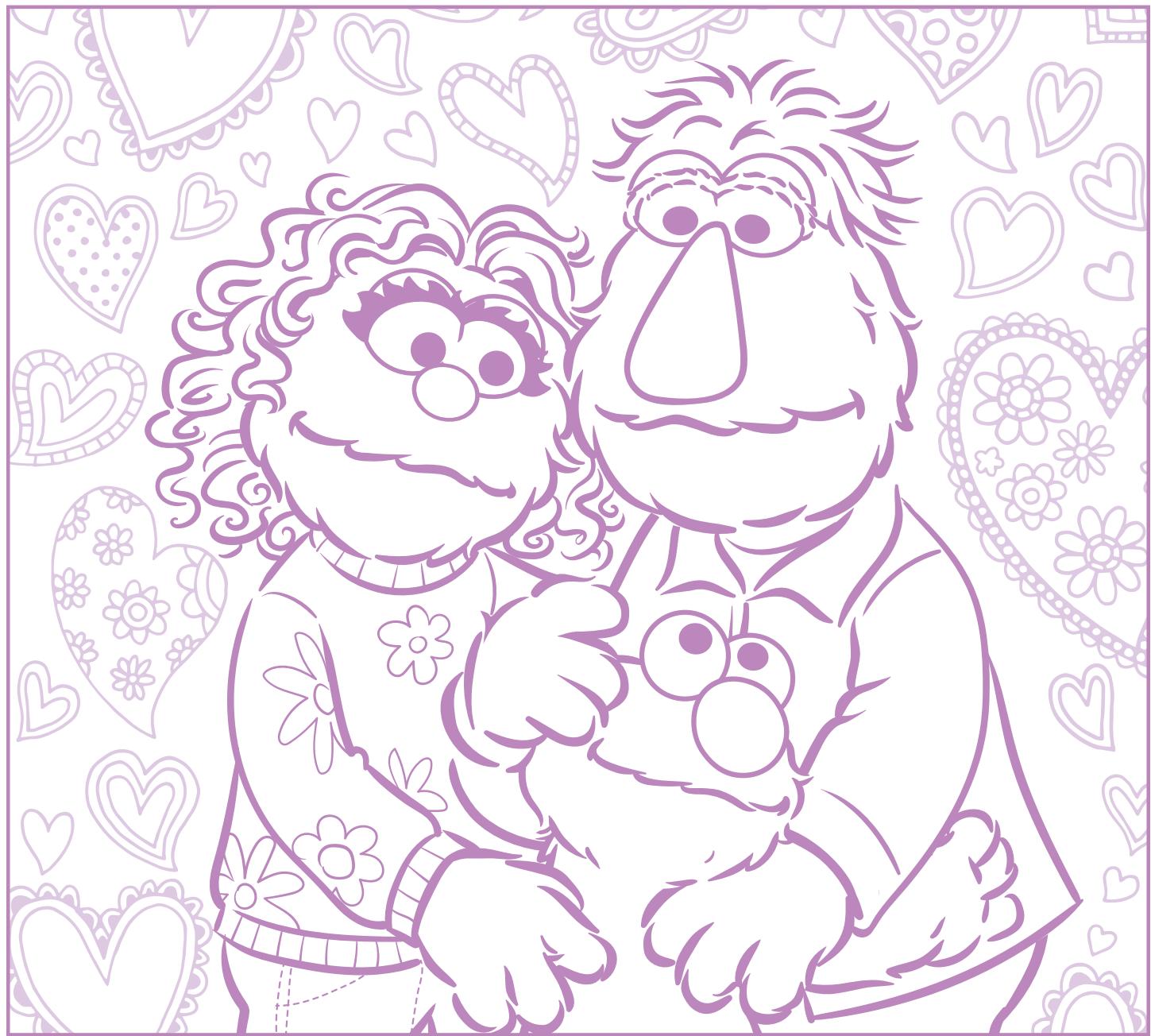
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## We Have Each Other

Even in stressful times, there are opportunities to connect as a family. In quiet moments, you might spend some time coloring this page with children. Remind them, "No matter what, we always have each other."



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## Look for Helpers!

After a flood, it can be reassuring to know that there are many people working to make things better.

Let children know that there are helpers are all around. You might see:

- » Emergency responders
- » Plumbers and electricians
- » Neighbors helping neighbors
- » Utility crews
- » Volunteers handing out supplies
- » Doctors and nurses at clinics or mobile units



Construction workers help fix people's homes so they are safe to live in again.



Volunteers and aid workers distribute clothes, food, and supplies to families that need help.

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## Take Care of Yourself

During times of stress, it can be easy to forget about your own physical and emotional needs. When you care for yourself, you can better comfort and protect children—and little ones learn lifetime lessons by watching their parents take care of themselves and build their own resilience. Try to do something that helps you feel a little better each day.

### Heart Breathe

Close your eyes and put your hands on your belly. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth.

### Heart Relax

To relieve muscle tension, roll your neck and shoulders or make big arm circles.

### Heart Stay Active

Even five minutes of stretching can help your body feel more relaxed and cared for. Remember to take care of your body in simple ways like eating and drinking water.

### Heart Connect

Reach out to someone you trust and can talk to—a relative, friend, faith leader, or counselor. Even a few minutes of rest, laughter, or connection helps rebuild strength. You are not alone.

### Heart Imagine

Close your eyes, take slow, deep breaths and picture a situation or place that feels peaceful. Sing or listen to favorite song. "Dig deep" for the best, strongest parts of yourself. This will help keep you steadier and remind you that you can keep it together for your little ones.

### Heart Show

Let your children see you take care of yourself, it helps them learn how to care for themselves too!



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## Story: The Really Rainy Day

**It rained and rained. And then it rained some more.**  Elmo heard a loud noise coming from his daddy Louie's phone. It was an emergency alert, warning them about a flood.

"Special helpers are letting us know that we need to leave for a little while," said Louie. "Sometimes when it rains a lot, water rises to places it isn't supposed to go. But we have a plan to stay safe. We're going to pack a few things and go somewhere safe."

**Elmo's family did have a plan.**  Elmo's mommy Mae brought their family go-bag, Elmo's daddy Louie put a leash on their dog Tango, and Elmo grabbed his favorite lovey, Baby David. Together, they left to stay at Elmo's Auntie's house, where it was dry and cozy. Elmo was happy to be dry but he was still missing his home.

"Elmo misses Elmo's bed," Elmo whispered. "And Elmo's books. And Elmo's whole neighborhood."

Mae gave Elmo a big hug. **"I miss those things too. But I'm glad we're safe and home is wherever we are together."** 

The next day, Elmo saw big trucks and people wearing rain boots and vests.

"They're helpers!" said Louie. "They're cleaning up and making things safe. Soon we'll be able to go back home."

Elmo waved at a neighbor handing out clean water. Then he drew a picture of the helper and put it on the fridge at Auntie's house. Later, Elmo made up a silly song about water boots and squishy socks. That night, snuggled under a blanket, Elmo smiled.

"Things feel different," he said, "but Elmo thinks we're doing okay." 



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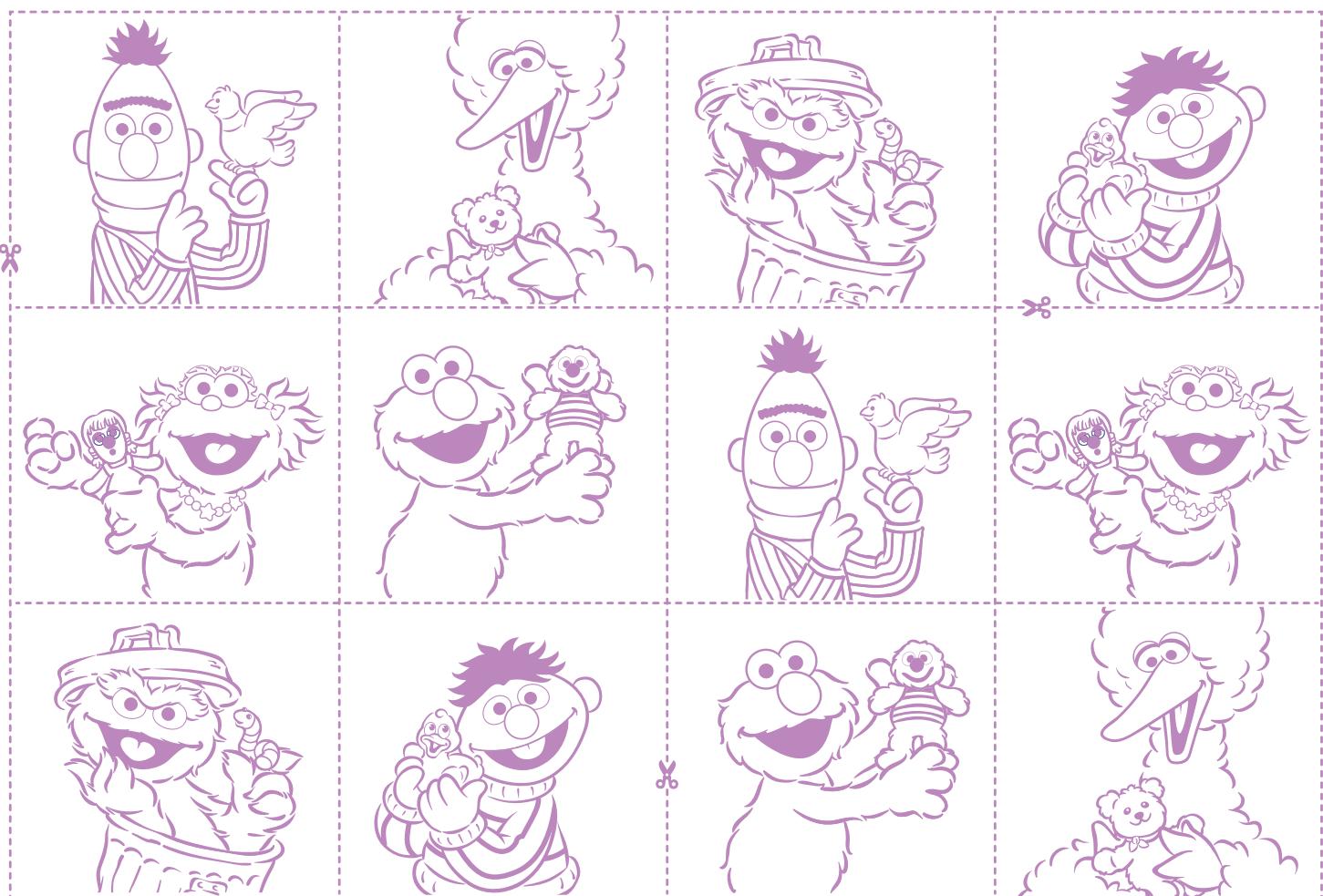
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## Our Favorite Things

All the *Sesame Street* friends have a favorite toy or animal friend. Have your child choose one of these cards to hold when they need a *Sesame Street* friend to help them feel better.

### Memory Game Instructions

1. Play with a friend. Cut apart these cards and lay them face down in a big square shape.
2. Take turns flipping over cards, two at a time. If the cards match, keep them and take another turn. If the cards do not match, turn them back over in their places and try to remember the cards you've seen so you can find matches in the next turn. Let your friend take a turn.
3. Play until all the cards have been matched.



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