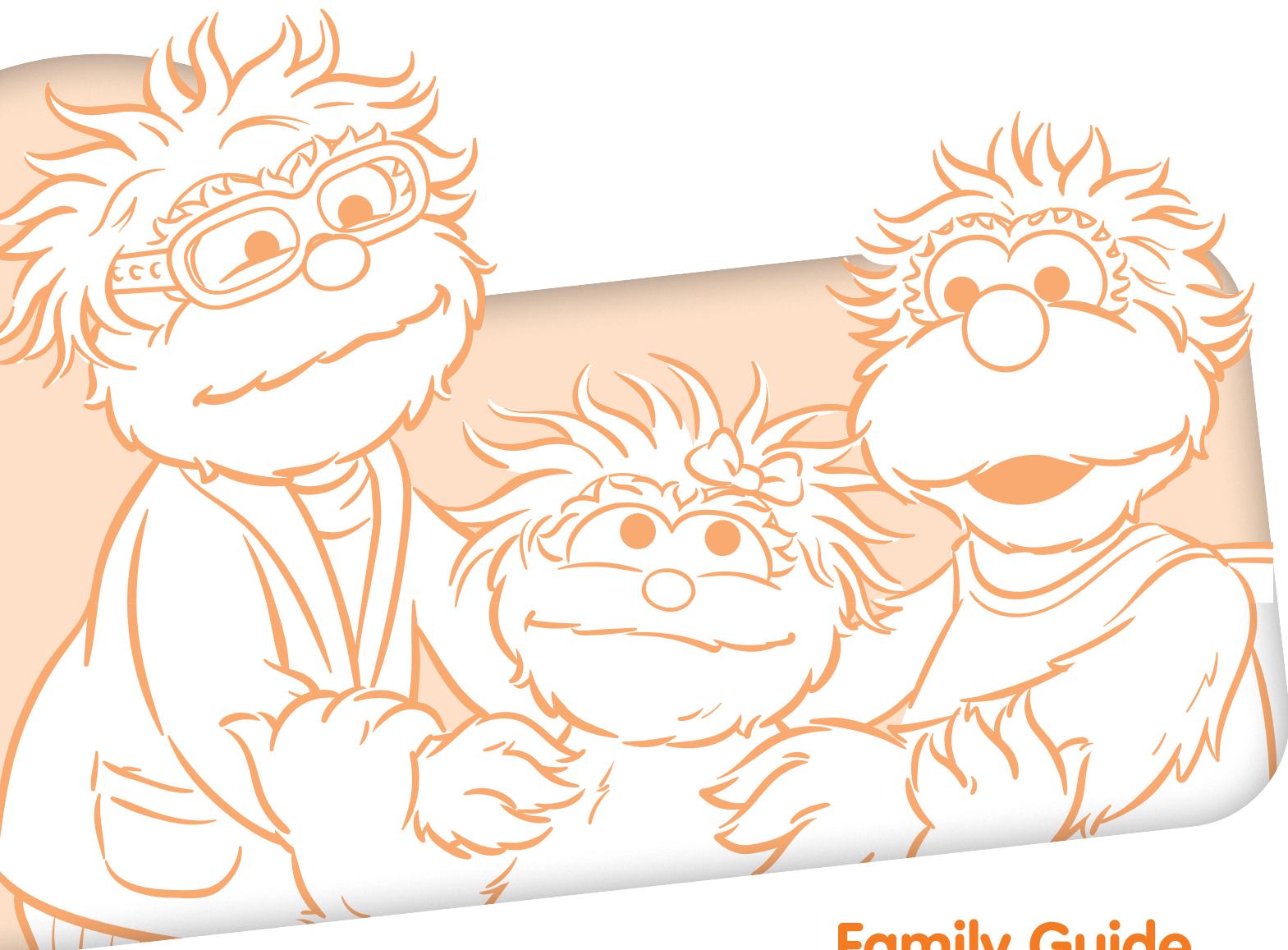


Here for Each Other

HELPING FAMILIES THROUGH EMERGENCIES

Tornadoes



Family Guide

INSIDE YOU'LL FIND:

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

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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 and follow Sesame Workshop on [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [Facebook](#), and [X](#).

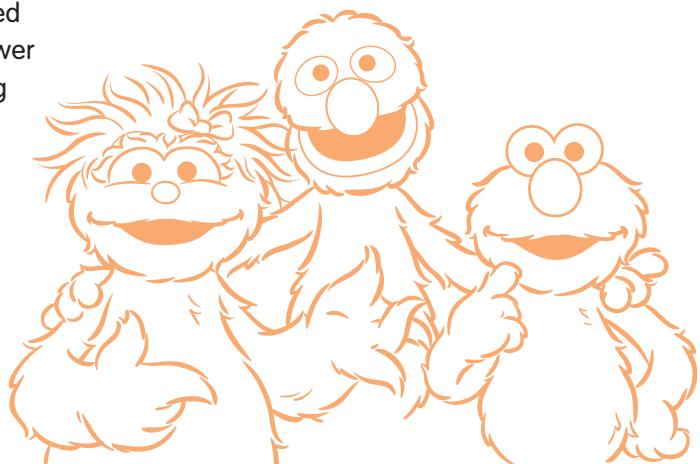
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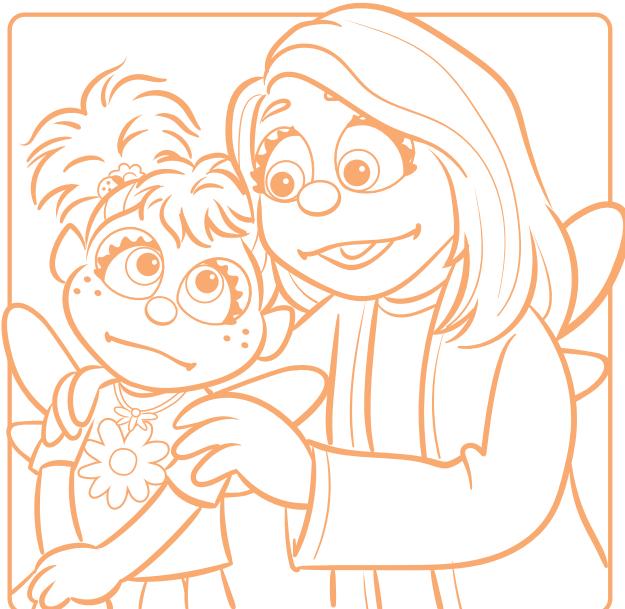
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You have each other.

Tornadoes can happen quickly—with strong winds, loud noises, and sudden changes—and sometimes the damage can be long lasting. It's normal for children (and grown-ups!) to feel shaken or scared after a storm like this. Even when things look different outside, 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 tornado—through play, talking, and spending time together. And remember, you are not alone. We are here for each other!



SAFETY FIRST

- » When a tornado warning is issued or you see signs of a tornado, take shelter immediately.
 - » Go to a small, windowless interior room or basement on the lowest level of your building.
 - » Avoid areas with wide-span roofs like gyms or auditoriums.
 - » If you are outside or in a vehicle and cannot reach a sturdy building, seek a low-lying area away from trees and cover your head.
- » Watch for changing sky conditions: greenish tint, rotating or lowering clouds, large hail, or loud “freight train”-like roar.
- » Know the difference between a tornado watch (a tornado might happen) and a tornado warning (tornado spotted or indicated by radar—take shelter immediately).
- » Watch out for broken glass, sharp objects, or fallen branches.
- » Stay away from downed power lines and damaged buildings.
- » Keep phones charged when you can and use text messages if voice calls don't go through.
- » 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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Questions and Answers

Your child may have questions. Let them ask at their own pace and try to answer honestly and calmly.

What Happened?

There was a tornado, which is a strong and powerful wind that looks like a funnel. Tornadoes can make loud noises and sometimes cause damage. We had to act quickly to stay safe, and that might have felt scary. It's over now, and I'm here with you. My job is to keep you safe, and we'll get through this together.

Will We Be Okay?

Yes, we will be okay. It may take a little while to get back to our regular routine, but there are helpers all around, fixing things and making sure our community gets better.

Why Did This Happen?

Did We Do Something Bad?

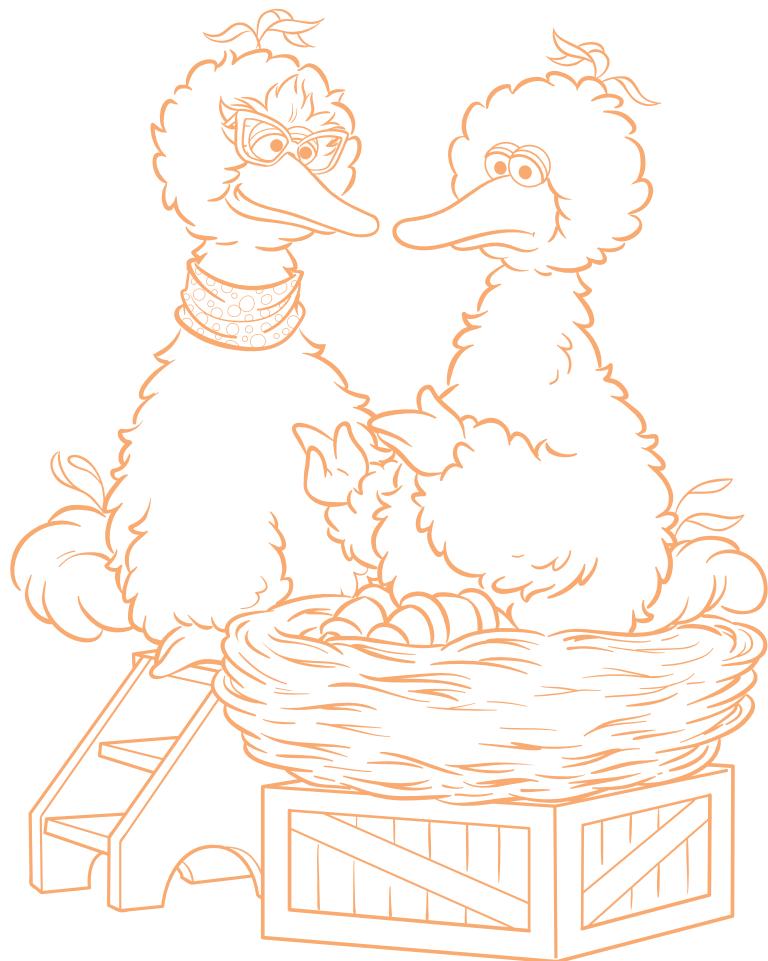
No, we didn't do anything bad or wrong. Tornadoes happen when a certain kind of storm makes the wind form into a funnel shape. The good news is that we're safe now.

Who Will Take Care of Me?

I will take care of you. I'm doing 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 the helpers tell us it's safe. But even when we aren't in our house, we are still a family and 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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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 tornado. 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 even if your home or neighborhood looks different, there are many helpers working to fix things, and you will take care of them no matter what. Hold hands and snuggle often! Holding a comfort item, like a blanket or toy, may also help. Lean into your relationships with the trusted friends and neighbors around you: "see how our community is getting through this together!"

Model Healthy Ways of Coping

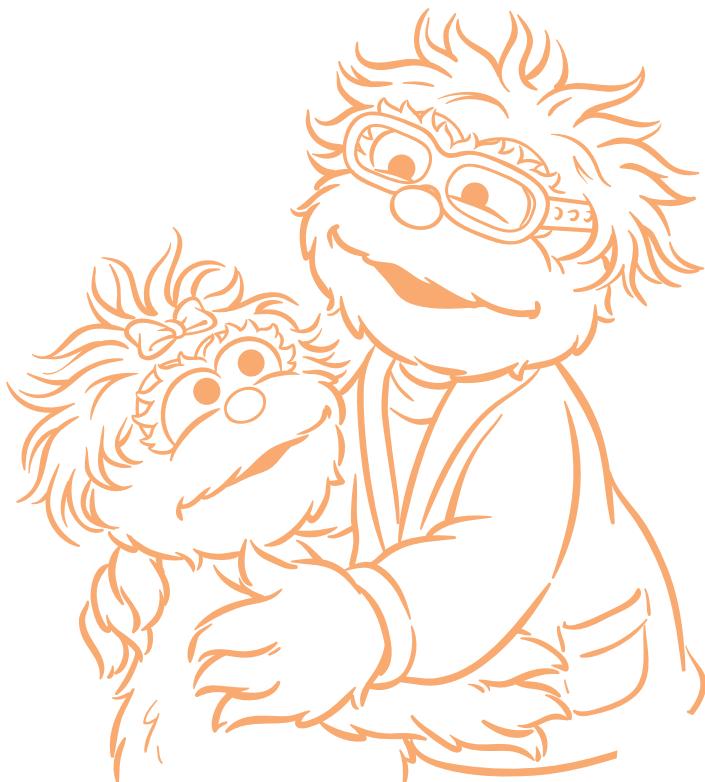
After a tornado, children look to the adults around them to see how they should feel and react. As much as possible, try to stay calm and encourage children to talk about their feelings, while surrounding them with positive conversations and activities. This also means taking care of yourself!

Try to Keep One Routine

After a tornado, schools or childcare may be closed, and daily life might feel different. Finding a few consistent activities that your child can look forward to each day can give them a sense of control. Even simple routines like bedtime stories or a set snack time can help. You might let your child know that things will be different for a little while, but you will also have special time together.

Monitor the Media

Avoid your child seeing repeated images of the tornado 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 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's normal for children to feel worried or act differently after a tornado. If these changes last a long time or make daily life hard, your child may need some extra help.

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 tornado will happen again...

- » **try to** keep your child away from reminders of the tornado in the news, online, or in conversations. Reassure them that the tornado is over, and that even if another one happens, you have a plan to stay safe—grown-ups are watching the weather and will help keep everyone protected.

If you observe fear around reminders of the tornado like wind, thunder, lightning, or sirens...

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

If you observe trouble sleeping...

- » **try to** keep a consistent bedtime routine to provide comfort. Read a favorite story or sing a favorite song each night. Doing a "body scan," where children take a deep breath and check in on how each part of their body feels from head to toe, can be a good way to reground.

If you observe your child is less open, verbal, or otherwise withdrawn...

- » **try to** ask how they're feeling and provide an opportunity for discussion or for them to ask questions. (I see you're crying, it seems like you're feeling sad. I feel sad sometimes too. Do you want to tell me more about how you are feeling?) Also, offer other ways for them to express themselves such as drawing or engaging in pretend play.

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 or "drawing out" their feelings.

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 typical behaviors after a stressful event and will likely fade with time and support.

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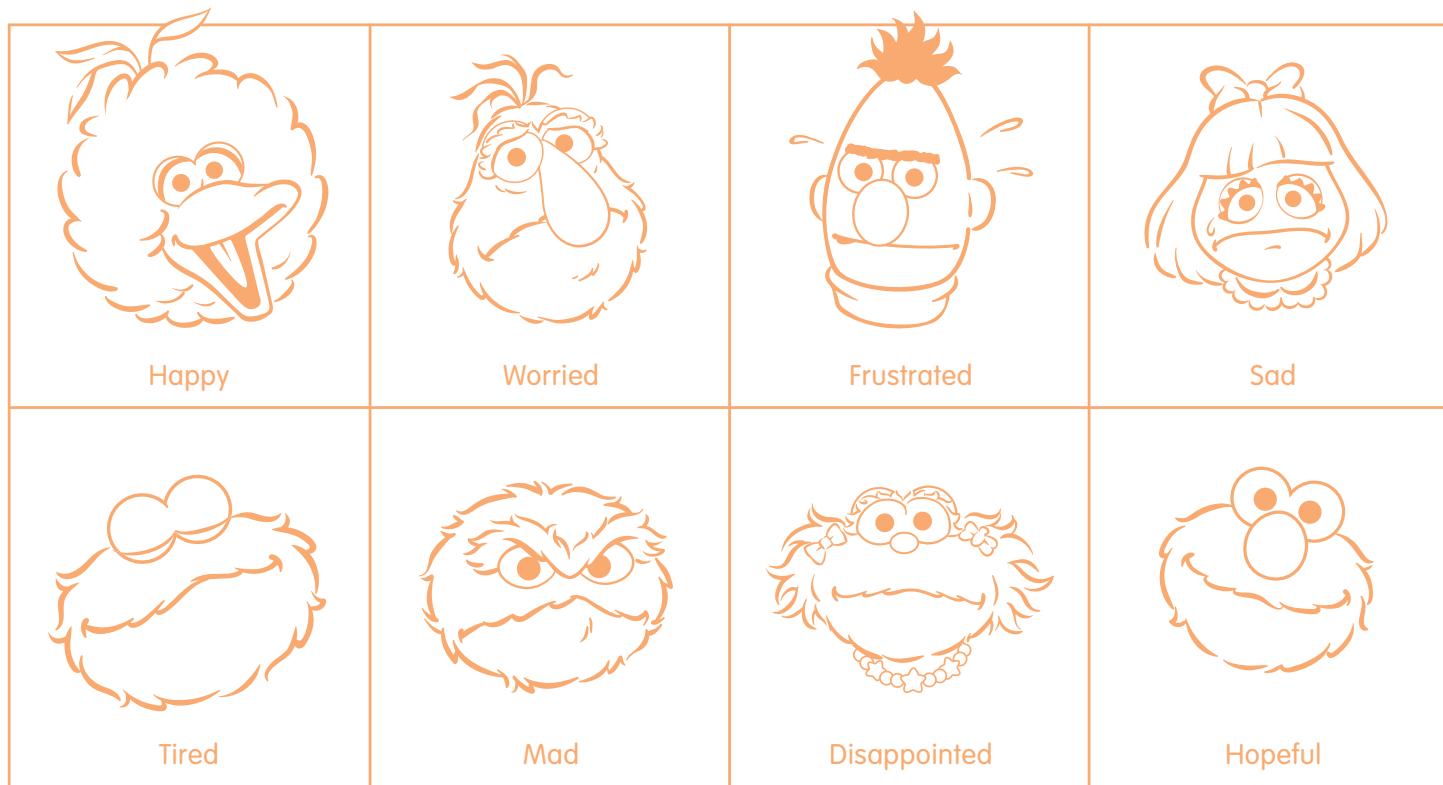
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Big Feelings

After a tornado your child may have big feelings that come and go in waves. You can help by giving your child words to name their feelings and by asking questions that encourage them to open up. A good place to start is by observing children's behavior ("I notice you are a little quiet today") or asking children where they are feeling something in their body ("Where do you feel your nervous feeling in your body?").

How Do You Feel?

Show your child 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 worried face. I understand why you might feel worried. Can you tell me more about it?"



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.

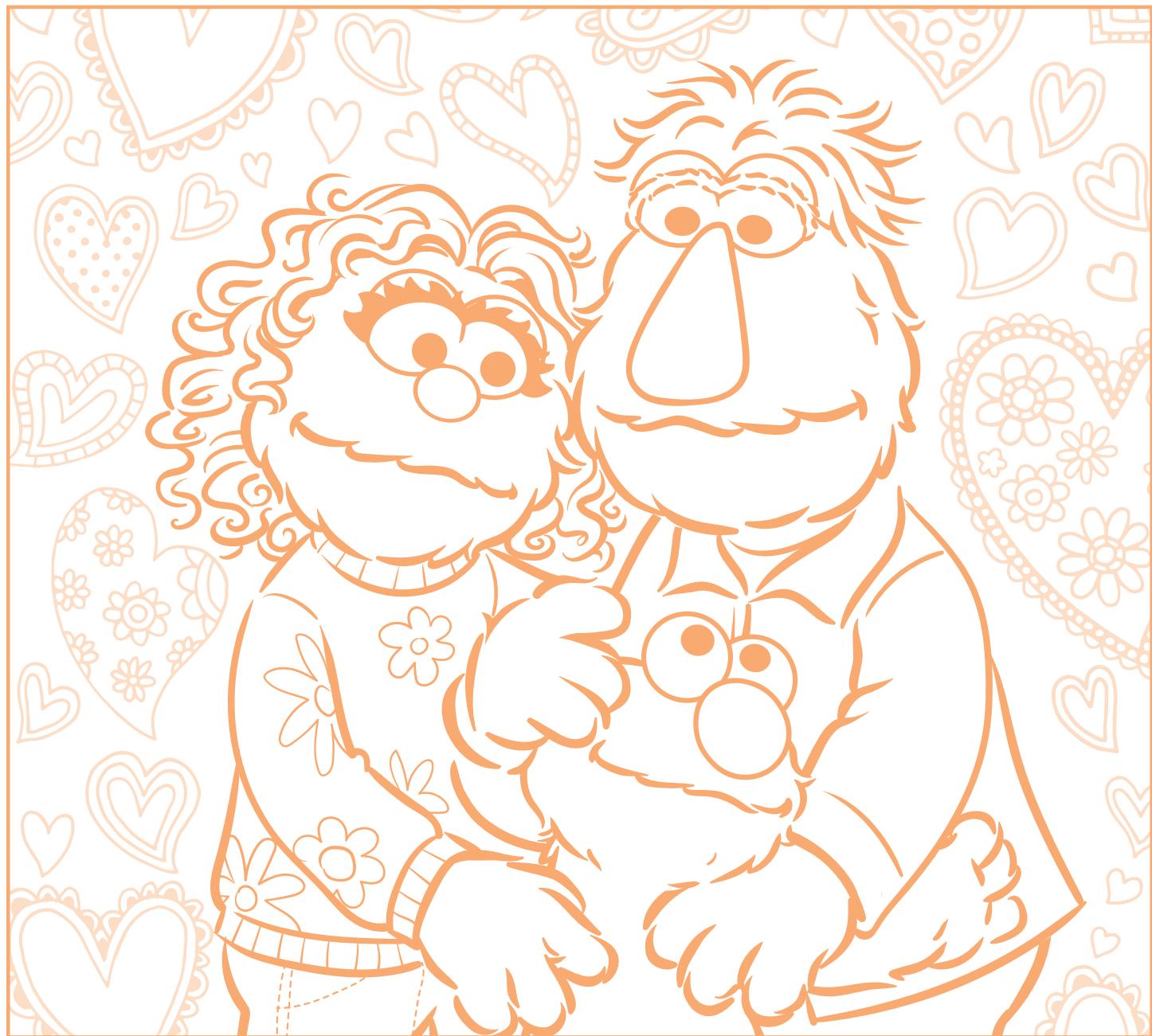
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We Have Each Other

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!

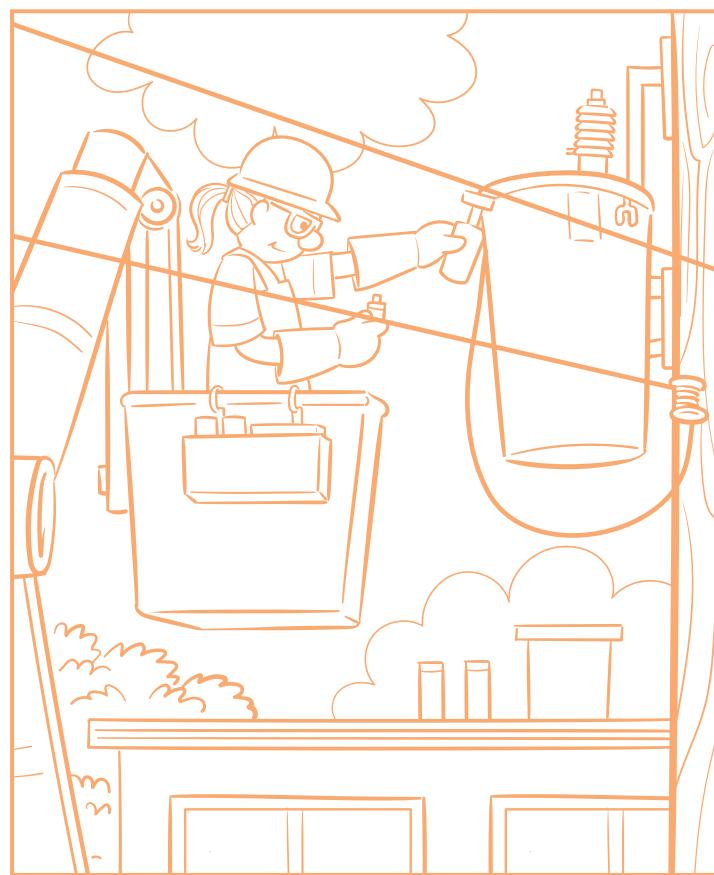
After a tornado, it can be reassuring to know that there are many people working to make things better. Let children know that there are helpers are all around. You might see:

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

Read about the special helpers pictured below, as children color them in. Have they noticed any around them?



Construction workers build all sorts of houses and buildings! After a tornado they work hard to fix people's homes so they are safe to live in again.



Line workers help to fix power lines so electricity can come back to neighborhoods after big storms like tornadoes.

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Take Care of Yourself

After a tornado, it's normal to feel stressed, tired, or overwhelmed. 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. You might also slowly raise and lower your arms as you breathe.

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 a 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: After the Tornado

One morning, Elmo woke up and looked out the window. 

The sky was quiet now, but he could see branches in the yard and a big truck down the street.

"Elmo," said his daddy, "the tornado is over. We stayed safe, and now people are starting to clean up."

Elmo remembered the loud wind and the sirens the day before. He remembered how they went to their safe place, and how they all snuggled close with a blanket and a flashlight. "Elmo didn't like the storm," Elmo said.

"I know," said his mommy. **"I didn't like it either. It was loud and fast. But we stayed safe together. And now helpers are out there making things better."**

Elmo looked outside again. He saw a person with a helmet clearing tree branches.

He saw another helper fixing a power line. He even saw a neighbor giving out sandwiches. "Look at all the helpers!" Elmo said. "They're working hard!"

"That's right," said his daddy. "And we can help too—by taking care of ourselves, staying cozy, and showing gratitude to the special helpers, our neighbors, and each other for working together to get through this hard time."

Later that day, Elmo drew a picture of all the helpers in his neighborhood. Then he and his mommy made a special card to give to the next one they saw.

"We're moving on after the storm," said Elmo's mommy.
"Together!" said Elmo. 



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Our Favorite Things

All the *Sesame Street* friends have a favorite toy or animal friend that helps them feel better when they are scared or sad. 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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