Words matter when talking about the mental health impact of emergencies. In emergencies, people may be going through the most difficult time of their lives. Depict them with warmth and compassion and avoid showing degrading situations or ways that could put them at risk of retribution or stigmatization. Even when reflecting the extreme severity of the situation, maintain their dignity and support their agency.

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT

The IFRC promotes a community-based mental health and psychosocial support approach including psychological first aid, reuniting family members, structured activities for children, safe spaces for children, ensuring access to information about reactions to stressful events and good coping mechanisms and establishing support groups. It is also part of the support to refer to professional assistance for those with existing mental health problems or who develop serious complications after the disaster.

TALKING TO CHILDREN

When talking to children in emergency settings be mindful that children are particularly vulnerable both physically and emotionally. • Obtain permission to talk to a child from their caregiver • Do not pressure a child to talk about things the child may not want to share • Treat a child with the same respect as if talking to an adult • Consider children’s right to privacy and whether it is necessary to use their names or photographs • If coming across an unaccompanied child, bring the child to a safe place where efforts to reunite it with caregivers or family will be made.