



Facing Fear

Background

MASTERS OF DISASTER®

Facing Fear

Facing Fear is one of the topics in the series of *Masters of Disaster* materials created by the American Red Cross for schools, clubs, organizations and families across the country. Facing the unknown is frightening for anyone, but even more so for those who do not understand the problem and do not know where and how to get information and support. You can help young people better prepare for unforeseen dangerous events and find support through difficult times.

These activities are specifically tailored for children in lower elementary (K–2), upper elementary (3–5) and middle school (6–8) grades. *Facing Fear* is divided into two sections: Fear and Facts, and Tough Issues.

Masters of Disaster Connections

Refer to the following modules in the *Masters of Disaster* series to learn more about a particular topic and to reinforce the objectives of the lesson.

- An essential part of preparing for any disaster is to be ready with plans, supplies and practice. *Be Disaster Safe* from *Masters of Disaster* inspires young people by teaching them to prepare for all hazards.
- The lessons of *In the Aftermath* focus on recovery after a disaster—for the individual, the school and the community.

Why Talk About Facts and Fear?

Young people can feel overwhelmed with concerns of safety, security and trust. Worries about their own safety as well as the safety of the important people in their lives can be heightened as they hear stories of war, terrorism or pandemic flu. One result of human-caused tragedy may be intense feelings of anger and even an urge for revenge. With a flawed understanding of events, these feelings may develop into hateful or hurtful talk, play or actions. Gathering correct information from proper sources is essential if students are to begin dealing effectively with traumatic situations.

Why Talk About Tough Issues?

Frightening events, such as war, terrorism, violence or pandemic flu, affect our world. Human-caused tragic events are particularly frightening and raise unique concerns.

Young people need to know that their reactions and feelings are normal. They need to recognize that others have very similar feelings. Most important, young people need to know that people are working to ensure their safety.



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at www.redcross.org/disaster/masters



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Terrorism

Terrorism or violent actions instill fear in individuals and communities. Because they happen without warning, people generally think there is nothing they can do to prepare. This unpredictability can leave us with a sense of vulnerability and with worries that the event could be repeated anywhere, anytime. With increased media coverage, even those not attacked directly can be significantly affected by the event. Images make us feel closer to the victims, and we may perceive ourselves as victims as well.

The questions that arise from disasters of human design are difficult, if not impossible to answer. We want to understand “why” or “how is it possible” and can be left frustrated by a lack of response. In many cases, there are actions that people take every day to prevent and mitigate the effects of human-caused disasters, such as hazardous material spills—from redirecting trucks carrying these materials to travel on different roads to creating regulations for handling and disposing of such materials. It is also important for young people to realize that systems are in place for national and local security and response. Understanding these systems, accessing accurate information and having the opportunity to ask trusted adults for answers and emotional support can help young people. In the instance of acts of terrorism, this type of understanding will also contribute to maintaining a healthy state of mind during tragic events such as terrorism.

Moreover, the same actions people take to prepare for a natural disaster will also help in the event of a human-caused disaster. These steps are—

- Make a plan.
- Get a kit.
- Be informed.

See *Masters of Disaster Be Disaster Safe* for lessons on these preparedness steps.

More information on terrorism preparedness can be found on the Preparedness Today Web site from the American Red Cross and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at http://www.redcross.org/preparedness/cdc_english/CDC.asp and on the Web site of the Department of Homeland Security at <http://www.dhs.gov/index.shtm>.

War

Although young people may not understand the causes or events of war, they need to understand there are laws and people at work to ensure the safety and the protection of others. During war there are vulnerable people who need help and protection. Organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, work with countries around the globe to further and protect the rights and principles set forth in the cornerstone of humanitarian law—the Geneva Conventions.

The Geneva Conventions set out responsibilities and limits during conflict. In 1949, an international convention of diplomats wrote 429 articles of law to protect wounded and sick soldiers and those who care for them, and they set rules for humane treatment of prisoners of war and civilians caught in the midst of war. In 1977, additional rules were adopted by over 100 nations.



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Find more information on humanitarian organizations and their efforts around the world on the Web site of the International Committee of the Red Cross at <http://www.icrc.org/eng>.

Flu Pandemic

The flu, also known as influenza, is a contagious respiratory disease caused by influenza viruses. In the United States, most people get the flu during an annual flu season that begins in the fall and ends in the spring. This kind of flu is called seasonal flu. Sometimes a new type of flu may emerge to which people have no resistance. This flu spreads easily from person to person, causing serious illness, and it can sweep around the world in a very short time. This kind of flu is called pandemic flu.

A flu pandemic is the global outbreak of the flu that occurs when a new influenza virus emerges for which people have little or no immunity, and for which there is no vaccine. A severe flu pandemic could lead to high levels of illness, death, social disruption and economic loss. During a pandemic, everyday life could be disrupted because so many people could be seriously ill at the same time. Schools and businesses may close, and basic services, such as public transportation and food delivery, could be disrupted. Health care facilities could be overwhelmed and medical supplies depleted. The need for vaccine would certainly exceed the supply.

It is difficult to predict when the next pandemic will occur, or how severe it will be. Wherever and whenever it starts, everyone is at risk, and everyone needs to know how to prepare. We all must understand that there are things we can do to prevent the spread of disease, even in time of pandemic. These actions include learning and practicing healthful hygiene, learning facts about the flu and storing nonperishable foods and water.

Health services in the United States are working closely with other countries and the World Health Organization to strengthen systems to detect influenza outbreaks that might cause a pandemic. The effects of a pandemic can be lessened if preparations are made ahead of time.

Find more information on pandemic and the health community's efforts to prevent and prepare for a flu pandemic at www.pandemicflu.gov.



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