



# ASSOCIATION OF INFANT MENTAL HEALTH IN TENNESSEE

## Helping Children Through an Emergency

During emergencies, it is natural for adults and children to respond with strong emotions.

These emotions can help you act quickly to ensure everyone's safety. However, balancing this sense of urgency with regulated emotions and an "in-charge" presence is essential. It is your ability to remain calm, take control, and be supportive that will support infants' and young children's mental health during emergencies.

### Respond with an Early Relational Approach By Being:

#### Relationship Focused



Knowing children grow, develop, and heal in the context of relationships.

#### Fully Present



Awareness of what is going on around you, paying attention to the present moment.

#### Emotionally Available



Awareness of your own emotions and the ability to support children's big feelings, without minimizing or denying the way they feel.

#### Safe



Knowing the importance of feeling safe.

#### Responsive rather than Reactive



Awareness of your own feelings and the ability to control how you respond to children's challenging behavior.

#### Culturally Responsive



Awareness of your own cultural identity and biases allows you to support children from diverse families, communities, and cultures.

#### Engaged in Self-Care & Community Care



Taking care of yourself and accepting support helps you to meet the needs of the children and families you serve.

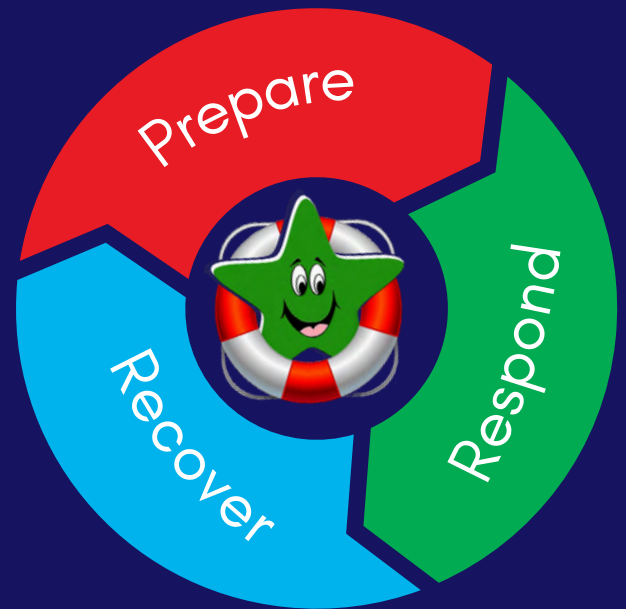
"How you are is as important as what you do in making a difference for infants, toddlers, and their families."

Pawl & St. John, 1998

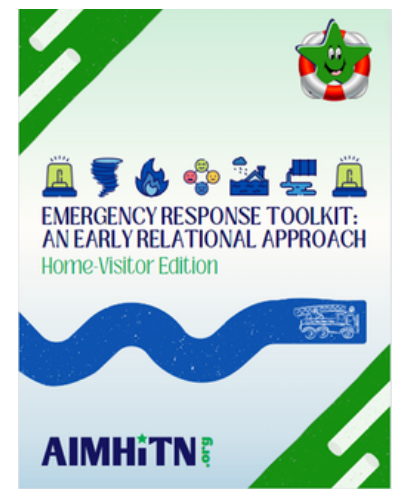
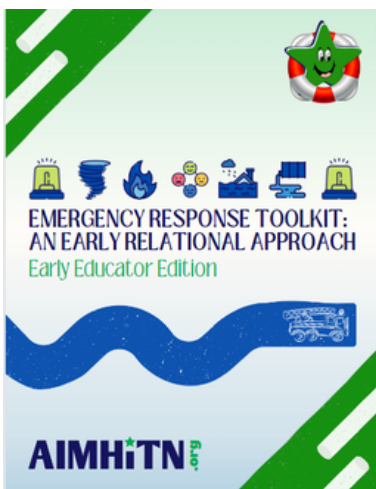


## 5 Tips for Communicating with Children During an Emergency:

1. **Check in with yourself:** Pause and take a deep breath so that you can fully attend to your own and the children's needs.
2. **Attend:** Talk to them about what is going on around them - even if they don't understand the words. e.g. "That noise was loud and scared you, I am going to pick you up, hold you, and keep you safe."
3. **Assure:** Tell them that you are there to keep them safe.
4. **Be Honest:** Use simple, age-appropriate language. Let them know what happens next.
5. **Stay Self Aware:** Remember, children respond to volume, tone of voice, and emotions.



To access this free toolkit, scan this QR code.



*Strong Foundations. Healthy Relationships. Bright Futures.*

Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee (AIMHiTN) is a professional membership organization. We welcome all those who are part of the infant and early childhood workforce to join us as we make a lasting impact on infants, toddlers, their families, and the future of Tennessee.

### CONNECT WITH US

 [instagram.com/AIMHiTN](https://www.instagram.com/AIMHiTN)

 [facebook.com/AIMHiTN](https://www.facebook.com/AIMHiTN)

 [Emergency Preparedness](https://www.aimhitn.org)

 <https://www.linkedin.com/company/aimhitn>

[aimhitn.org](https://www.aimhitn.org)

**AIMHiTN**.org

This project is funded by the TN Department of Human Services and TN Department of Health.