

# There Was A Fire

A Story for Young Children on Maui





## A note to caregivers



This story is designed for children ages 3-8 who have been affected by the Maui wildfires.

Read this story aloud with your child once through, and then invite them into draw their own pictures. Some children will not want to do this – and that is okay!

The purpose of this tool is to start giving children language to talk about their experience. Another way to use this is to write your own family's story of the fires, together, when you are ready.

At the end of the story there is a space to create a safety plan, as well as resources for caregivers.

Be well.

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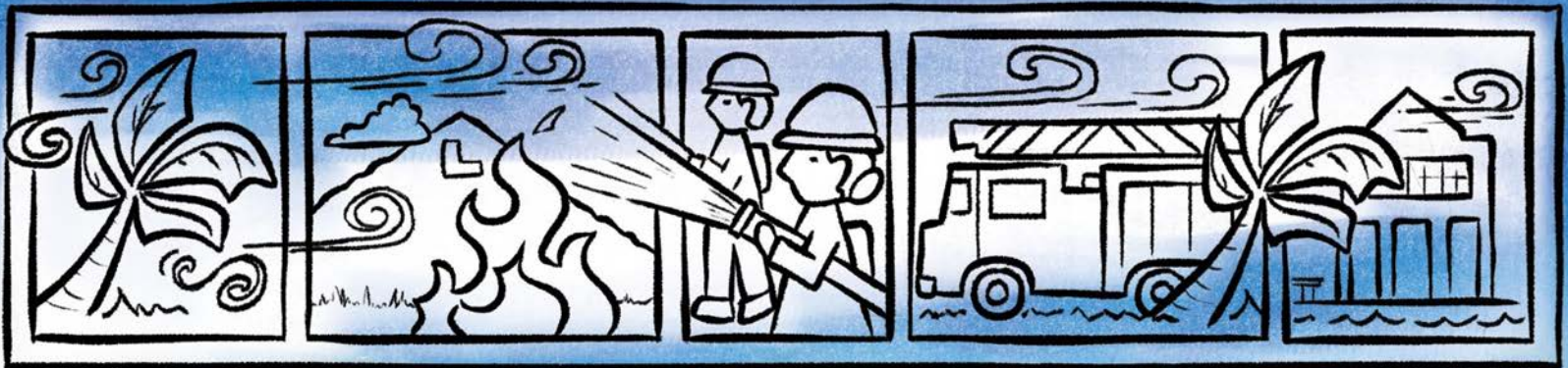


The winds were blowing very hard in Maui from a hurricane that was passing. A hurricane is a really big storm, with lots of wind and rain.

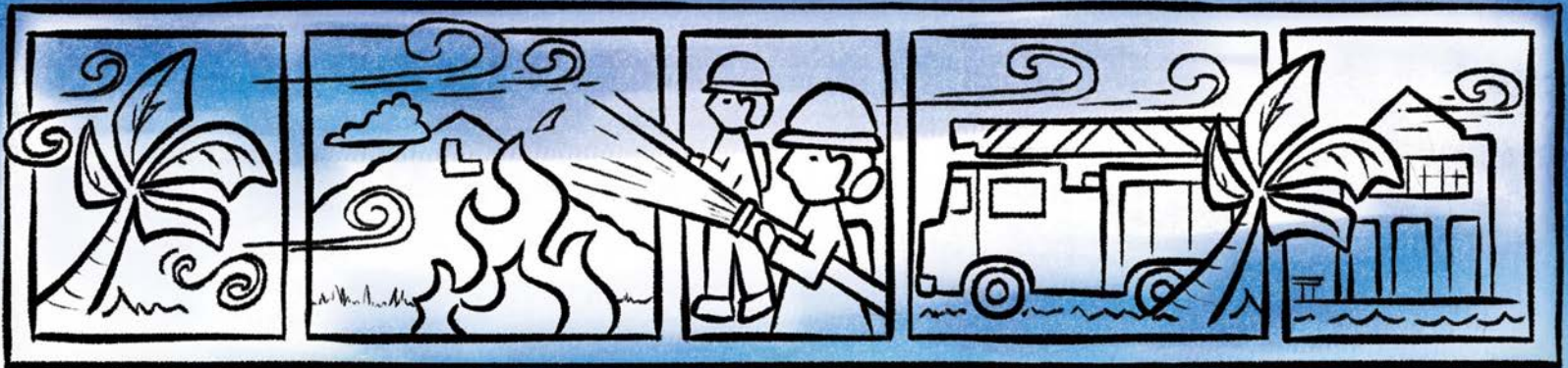
Winds are usually safe for people.

There were also wildfires burning. Wildfires happen when it doesn't rain very much.

Wildfires are usually safe for people. Firefighters work to keep them far away from houses, schools, and businesses.



Draw what you saw during the storm.



But this time in Maui, the big winds combined with the big fire.

The fire spread faster than the firefighters could put it out.

The fire was very dangerous and very scary. Some people jumped in the water to escape from the fire. A lot of buildings burned down. Some people died in the fire.



Draw what you saw during or after the fire.



There are fires are still burning, but the firefighters have contained them and are keeping people safe.

The fires that are burning now are not dangerous to people, because people are staying away from them.

When bad things happen, communities help each other. The community of Maui is helping each other by calling their friends, giving their friends a place to stay, and helping out at shelters.

Everyone around Hawai'i is thinking about the people of Maui. They are sending food, clothes, and money.





Draw how you've seen people helping.



Some people still feel scared about the fire. They may worry about everything that was burned in the fire. They may feel sad about Lahaina town being burned or the people who died. They may wonder, “will there be another fire?”

It is normal to feel sad, scared, and worried. These feelings may feel heavy in your body, or like you are distracted all the time.

Kids have those feelings, and so do grown-ups.



When you have big feelings,  
you can tell a grown-up about  
them.

Feelings are safe to have,  
even though they can be  
uncomfortable.

Talking to grown-ups can help  
you feel better.

What are you feeling?



Here are some other things you can do when you have big or uncomfortable feelings.



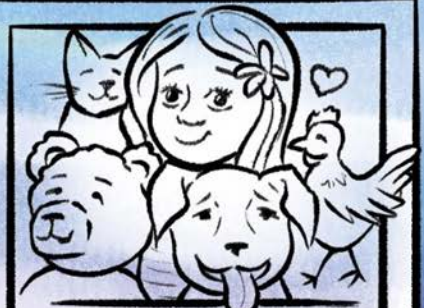
take three slow breaths



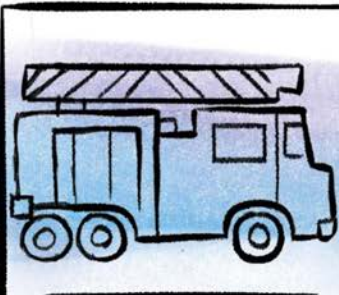
ask for a hug



draw a picture



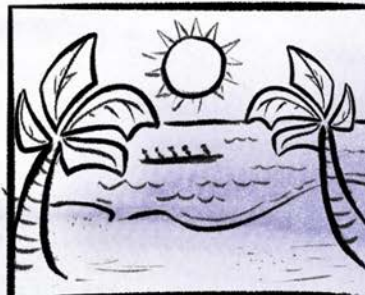
cuddle a stuffed animal or a pet



play firefighter



play with play dough

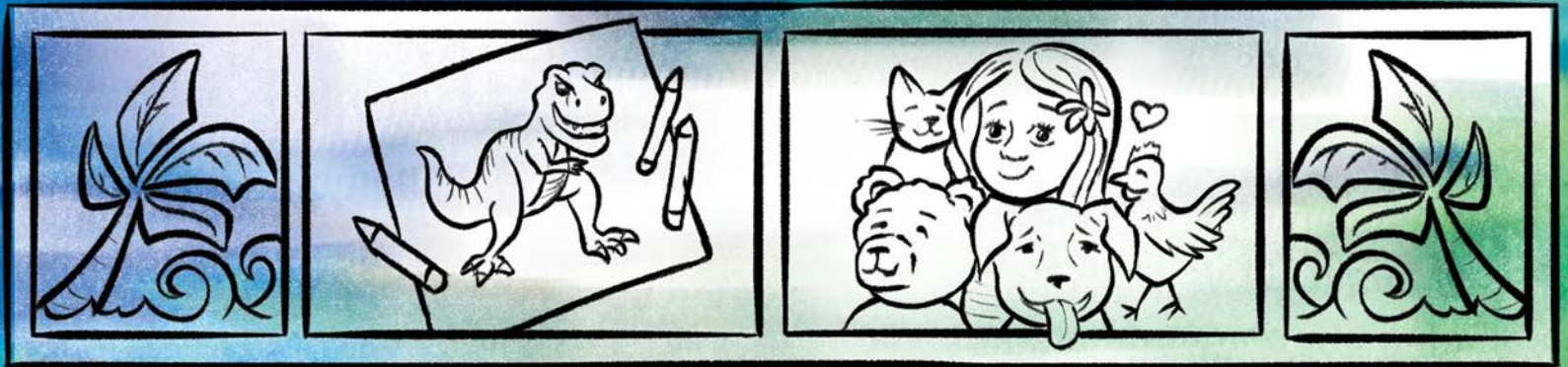


go to the beach



help your family make a safety plan

Can you think of anything else? What's your "feel better" plan?



It is grown-ups' job to make sure that kids are safe, and grown-ups are thinking and planning to keep everyone safe.

Kids have a job too!

Kids' job is let people know when they are having big feelings so that grown-ups can help them feel better.

A bad thing happened on Maui. But the people of Maui are working together to fix their island, and to help everyone feel safe again. What would you like to rebuild?



What do you want to rebuild?



## My 'Ohana's Safety Plan

Use these pages to make a safety plan with your child. For more information about family safety planning, visit <https://www.ready.gov>

## Important Phone Numbers

Who are the important people in your life that you want to reach in case of an emergency? If you can, include at least one that lives outside of Maui.

Name	Number

Having phone numbers memorized is very helpful, especially for young children who may get separated from adults.

Put your important numbers in a song and sing it together!

Many songs will work for this; choose a tune your child already knows well (like the ABC's).

Ex: "Mommy's cell is 808-555-1234.  
Mama's house is 808-123-4567.  
Those are numbers in my family;  
Next time won't you sing with me!"



## Meeting Place

Where will your family meet if you get separated in an emergency? Brainstorm together two places: one close that your child could walk to (for example, a big tree), and another further away. Have your child draw maps to both below.

Do a "practice emergency" and meet at the close place. Practice with your child to memorize the name or address of the far away place. (You can make a song for this, too!)

Our "close by" meeting place:

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Our "far away" meeting place:

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## Caregiver Resources



### Trauma and Young Children

People who have experienced trauma struggle with feeling safe. The core tenets of what is known as trauma-informed care are:

**Predictability** - Children feel safer when they know what to expect. Make routines, even small ones, as predictable as possible, and draw your child's attention to them. If your family has been displaced, this may look like saying goodnight in the same way as you did before the fire.

**Flexibility** - Trauma is very dysregulating - it makes people feel out of control. Meet children's big feelings with empathy and flexibility.

**Connection** - Children are very resilient, and the number one protective factor is connection with nurturing caregivers. Prioritize connection with your child.

**Empowerment** - A hallmark of trauma is loss of control. Give children things that they can be in charge of, or ways that they or your family together can help others.

For more information on this framework, consult the work of Alex Shevrin Venet.  
<https://unconditionallearning.org>



## Caregiver Resources



### Top Tips for Caregivers

- **Avoid exposure to news** footage of the fires to the greatest extent possible.
- **Know when you need a break** and have a plan to take care of your own stress and mental health.
- Create a **safety plan** with your family and have your child help. Safety plans can give children comfort that they know what to do in case of an emergency.
- **Expect atypical behavior** from your child. This may look like acting out, withdrawal, or clinginess. Know that they are asking for your love and support.
- **Play pretend** - as much as possible - and let your child take the lead. Do not shut down play that is disturbing, as this is children's primary way of expressing conflicting emotions.
- Find child-friendly language that describes your family's experience of the fire and begin to **tell it as a story**. Acknowledge the feelings that arise and emphasize the ways that your family has been helped or is helping others. Giving language to your experience is a powerful healing tool.



## Caregiver Resources



### Links and Books

- **Sesame Street** has a great page on talking to children about emergencies, and tips for making a safety plan with children <https://sesameworkshop.org/resources/talking-children-emergencies>
- **Trinka and Sam and the Big Fire** - a downloadable book about a family who lost their house to a wildfire. For some children, this book may be more accessible, because it is about mice and written in a storybook form. <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/trinka-and-sam-big-fire>
- **Tip sheet** from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network <https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/tip-sheet/assisting-parents-caregivers-in-coping-with-collective-traumas.pdf>
- **Book list** to support children in coping with disasters <https://www.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EP-book-list.pdf>

### Support Organizations

- **Maui Nui Strong** has a comprehensive directory of local organizations providing support. It is updated daily. <https://www.mauistrong.info/getsupport>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's **(SAMHSA's) Disaster Distress Hotline** is a 24-hour service that caregivers can call or text for mental health support for themselves or their child. 1-800-985-5990

