

# Do Something!

## Key Terms and Concepts

rebuilding

being prepared

community

## Purpose

- To have the students clarify their understanding of tragic events through verbal and nonverbal expressions.
- To have the students communicate their gratitude and concern for community helpers such as fire and rescue workers, and police officers.

## Objectives

### Students will—

- Reenact, reconstruct and rebuild using manipulative toys.
- Create thank-you cards to send to agencies helping people.
- Participate in activities to help the community.

### Activities

- “Building Back Better”
- “Cards and Letters”
- “Hands On!”



## Materials

- Manipulative toys
- Building materials, such as blocks

## “Building Back Better” Activity

(set up: 10 minutes; conduct: 20 minutes)

Before students arrive in class, set up a play area with manipulative toys such as fire engines, airplanes, ambulances, dump trucks, bulldozers, dolls and police cars and building materials such as blocks. Make the buildings look damaged.

1. Tell the students that this community has been damaged (by the event under discussion).
2. Invite them to rebuild the buildings and the roads and help the community recover.

**TEACHING NOTE:** Young children will want to use the toys to reenact the frightening event they have heard about or seen on television. This is a typical and healthy way for them to communicate and work through their feelings. For example, it is very common for children to build towers and knock them down in play over and over again. In this exercise, try to emphasize the positive aspects of rebuilding and helping.

3. As students play, use appropriate words to describe what they are doing. Emphasize how agencies such as the fire department and the public works department are helping people. Clarify that ambulances are taking injured people to hospitals. If you observe children reenacting actual events and asking questions, try to be truthful, but emphasize positive aspects if possible. Reassure them that they are safe and, if true, that the events they describe have happened far away.
4. Bring the activity to a close by helping the students put all the toys away. Congratulate the students for rebuilding the community and explain that the firefighters and rescue workers finish up by going home. It may be helpful to allow students to do this exercise on successive days, particularly if the events are ongoing and changing.



## Materials

- Art materials

## “Cards and Letters” Activity

(set up: 5 minutes; conduct: 30 minutes)

People of all ages want to help during an emergency. One way children can help is to write thank-you letters and cards to the people who have worked on response and recovery. The students have learned about these community response agencies in Lesson Plan 10: Community Preparedness, and they may have been drawn to one or more agencies as having contributed the most—or having made contributions the children can easily understand.

1. Ask the students if they have ever written or received a thank-you message. Ask them to describe the situation. Discuss how nice it is to be thanked for a job well done.
2. Ask the students whom they would like to thank for assisting in the response, such as firefighters, paramedics or law enforcement personnel. Discuss the contributions the agency’s representatives have made and the hardships they have faced.
3. Once students have selected one or two agencies, distribute materials such as construction paper, magazines to cut up for collages, glitter, glue and other card-making supplies. Ask each student to make a card, preferably with a personal message to a member of the response or recovery team.
4. Remind them that they probably will not be getting a personal reply but that their cards and letters will still brighten someone’s day. If you would like to improve the odds of a reply, send the cards and letters to a local agency, even if it was not directly involved. For example, your class might thank the local firefighters for all the work they do and for being willing to risk their lives to save people. Including a cover letter from the teacher or the class as a whole will also increase the likelihood of a response.



## **“Hands On!” Activity**

(set up/conduct: open-ended)

Children need to feel they are helping in times of crisis. Here are suggestions of activities that might help them feel needed and constructive:

- Plant a garden of hope or a memorial garden. Plant vegetables, care for them and celebrate the harvest by making soup and/or salad to eat, and/or taking the harvest to a local soup kitchen or homeless shelter. (Call the shelter in advance to find out if it accepts homegrown produce.) Or plant flowers, harvesting them into bouquets for a convalescent hospital, delivered with handmade cards.
- Make sandwiches for a local homeless shelter. (Call the shelter for scheduling and other suggestions.)
- Clean up trash on the playground or in a local park. Be sure to set up appropriate health and safety precautions, such as providing nonlatex gloves (preferable in case of latex allergy) for the students and establishing procedures to call the teacher when glass or other hazardous items are located.
- Attend first aid classes. Your local chapter of the American Red Cross may be able to assist you by teaching first aid skills to the class.
- Collect canned food items and donate them to a local food pantry.
- Make get-well cards for people injured in the event.
- Conduct a penny drive, hold a bake sale or support a local fund-raising activity whose proceeds are sent to your local American Red Cross chapter.