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Persona Doll Stories to Navigate Conversations Around Natural Disasters

Notes for Educators:

The following stories are meant to be used with Persona Dolls as a way to help you support the social and emotional well-being of the children you work with. These stories came as a response to the growing number of natural disasters in the last year including floods and fires, and the need for educators to have more tools to navigate tricky conversations with children.

Educators living in areas where folks have had to evacuate may still want to reach out to families to provide support and an opportunity to explore and name the feelings they are experiencing. A couple of options include:

- Record yourself sharing the Persona Doll story, and send it to families through text or email, encouraging them to share the video with their child as a conversation tool. When it comes to the questions, if you are recording a video, you can pause so children can respond to the screen or to a family member. You can also tell students to think about the questions instead of responding out loud. Or you can bypass the questions altogether.
- Share the written story with families and have them use a stuffed animal or other doll to help them have these conversations with their own children.

Pronouns: Please note, we refer to the persona dolls using the pronouns they/them/theirs. You may replace these pronouns with gender-specific pronouns that fit your Persona Doll's identity.

Pets: For stories involving evacuation, be sure to include pets you've mentioned previously in the story.



Story #1: UNDERSTANDING AND PROCESSING EVACUATION

Hello, friends. Our friend, **(DOLL)**, is here today, and they have something very important to share with you. They are feeling tired, sad, and a little scared today. Can they tell you what happened?

(DOLL) and their family live close to **(LOCATION OF OR AREA NEAR DISASTER)**. Most of the time, **(DOLL)** loves living there because their family gets to **(A COUPLE FAVORITE ACTIVITIES OR PLACES THEY LIKE TO GO)**.

Recently, there was a **(NATURAL DISASTER)** very close to where **(DOLL)** and their family live. To be safe from the **(NATURAL DISASTER)**, **(DOLL)** and their family had to evacuate.

- What does it mean to evacuate?
- When they had to evacuate, **(DOLL)** was scared. **(DOLL)** is wondering if there are things in the weather or that happen to the earth that scare you sometimes?
- What do you do to feel better?

(DOLL) and their family had to go stay with relatives in another city. **(DOLL)** was only able to pack one bag to bring with them. It was really hard to decide what to bring. They were worried they would forget something important and never be able to see it again.

- What are some important things you have that you would want to take with you?
- What would you choose to take with you in your one bag?

(DOLL) and their family stayed with their relatives for a whole week.

- Who helps your family when you need it?

When they returned home, **(DOLL)** was sad to see so many buildings and homes destroyed. Their home was damaged and needed cleaning up.

- Have you ever had something that was special to you get damaged? How did you feel?
- What helped you to feel better?





One thing that made **(DOLL)** feel good was seeing how much everyone in their neighborhood helped each other. Some families **(RELEVANT ACTIVITY)**. **(DOLL)** and their family helped **(RELEVANT ACTIVITY)**. People shared food, and adults took turns taking care of each other's children.

- What are some ways that you see people in your community or neighborhood help each other?
- How could we help families that are going through a hard time?

(DOLL) knows it will take time for them to feel better but having love and support from family and neighbors helps a lot.

(DOLL) thanks you for listening, and they feel better after sharing with you.





Story #2: LOSING A HOME TO WILDFIRE

(Note: This story could be adapted and used for other disasters, such as storms or floods)

Hi, everyone. Yesterday was a hard day for **(DOLL)**. They are feeling tired and sad, and they are wondering if they could talk to you all.

- Who do you talk to when you're sad?

One night last week, **(DOLL)** went to bed, just as usual. But they got woken up by a loud sound. Their **(CAREGIVER)** came into their room and said the loud noise was a fire alarm and they needed to leave right away. **(DOLL)** started to get dressed, but **(CAREGIVER)** said there wasn't time. They grabbed **(DOLL)**'s blanket and picked them up. As they left their home, it smelled smoky, and **(DOLL)** started to cough. **(DOLL)** wanted to go back for their favorite stuffed bear, but their **(CAREGIVER)** said no. They said it wasn't safe to go back.

- **(DOLL)** wants to know if anyone else has a favorite stuffed animal or blanket. Then you know how **(DOLL)** felt about leaving their bear behind.

When they got outside, there were fire trucks. **(DOLL)** was a little scared when she saw a firefighter in a big mask, but **(CAREGIVER)** said that it was just to protect the firefighter from the smoke, so they wouldn't cough like **(DOLL)** and her family did.

It was cold out, and no one in **(DOLL)**'s family had their shoes. They had to leave quickly and ended up driving a long way to a motel.

- **(DOLL)** is wondering if any of you have ever stayed in a motel.

Nobody got much sleep that night, and the next day, they made it to **(HOME OF A FAMILY MEMBER/ FAMILY FRIEND, OR SHELTER)**. **(DOLL)**'s **(CAREGIVER)** says they will stay there (for a while, but they have to find a new place to live).

(DOLL) is happy to be with their **(FAMILY MEMBERS/FRIENDS)**, but **(DOLL)** keeps thinking of things that were in their home that they miss. Their **(CAREGIVER)** says it's ok to miss their home and their things. Their **(CAREGIVER)** also says to think about how lucky they are that the whole family is safe, and they will work on getting a new home and new things.

- **(DOLL)** is wondering if anyone else here has ever had to leave something special behind? How did you feel about it? How did you help yourself feel better?





- Do you have any ideas about how **(DOLL)** could feel better when they feel sad about not being able to return home?

Some people have helped **(DOLL)**'s family by giving them some new toys and clothes, which has helped **(DOLL)** to feel better.

- **(DOLL)** is wondering if you have ideas for how to help other families when they are having a hard time.

(DOLL) thanks you for listening and helping them feel better.





Story #3: HELPING OTHERS WHO'VE EVACUATED

(DOLL) wants to tell you about their cousins that are staying near them.

- Does anyone else have cousins?

(DOLL)'s cousins had to evacuate their home in **(PLACE WHERE DISASTER OCCURED)** because of **(DISASTER)**.

- Does anyone know what evacuate means?

(DOLL) didn't know, so they asked their **(CAREGIVER)**. Their **(CAREGIVER)** said that sometimes when something dangerous happens, people need to leave their homes to be safe. When that happens, they are evacuating.

That's what happened to **(DOLL)**'s cousins. They had to leave quickly, and they were glad to have family to come to for support.

But you know, when they had to leave their home in a hurry, they weren't able to bring much with them.

- How would you feel if you had to leave so many of your things behind or not be able to bring your favorite toys with you?

(DOLL)'s **(CAREGIVER)** said it would be really good if they shared some of their things with their cousins that are close to their age. **(DOLL)** didn't mind sharing their clothes, but it was hard to share their books and toys. Their **(CAREGIVER)** said they knew it was hard, but it was important to help others in need when you can. **(DOLL)**'S **(CAREGIVER)** told them that even though it was hard right now, they would be glad later on that they shared and helped their cousins feel better.

So **(DOLL)** packed up a whole box of books and toys to share. It felt good to share - but also hard. **(DOLL)** loves their toys, especially **(TOY NAME)**, and they thought they'd miss them.

(DOLL)'s cousins got so excited when they opened the box of books and toys, and **(DOLL)** felt really good inside. When **(DOLL)** got home, they asked if they could pack up some more things to give away to people in need.





- **(DOLL)** wonders if anyone else here ever shares their stuff with cousins or other people?
 - Do you have cousins or friends that share things with you?
 - How does it feel to share? Did you feel sad and happy like **(DOLL)** did?
 - How does it feel when you help other people feel better?
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Story #4: PROCESSING THE NEWS WHEN IT'S SCARY

Our friend, **(DOLL)**, came in for a visit today. They are feeling a little scared, but they wanted to come talk to you because they think you could help them. Do you think we could listen to their story and try to help them?

Yesterday, **(DOLL)** was at home with their **(FAMILY MEMBER)**. She was playing with their **(TOY)** while their **(FAMILY MEMBER)** was watching the news on TV. Then, someone called their **(FAMILY MEMBER)**, and they had to go into a different room to talk. That's when something came up on the TV that frightened them.

- Have you ever seen something on TV or a video that frightened you?

(DOLL) saw that people's homes were being destroyed by **(NATURAL DISASTER)**, and there were people that lost everything. They felt scared, and their stomach hurt a little. They went into the kitchen where their **(FAMILY MEMBER)** was, and hugged their **(FAMILY MEMBER)**'s leg. **(FAMILY MEMBER)** told them they were almost done talking on the phone and **(DOLL)** should wait for them in the living room, but **(DOLL)** was afraid to go into the living room so they sat at the kitchen table.

When **(FAMILY MEMBER)** was done talking on the phone, they asked **(DOLL)** if everything was ok. **(DOLL)** wanted to tell their **(FAMILY MEMBER)** what they had seen, but they couldn't find the right way to say it.

- Have you ever had a hard time talking about something? How did you feel?

That night, **(DOLL)** had a hard time going to sleep, and the next day at school, they were pretty tired. They're wondering if you could give them some advice about what they could do so that they don't feel scared anymore.

- What are some things that **(DOLL)** could do? If they can't explain what they saw, what are some other ways they could share with their **(FAMILY MEMBER)** why they are scared?

(DOLL) says thank you for your advice. They are going to try some of the things you suggested.

