

Children's Coping Styles and Report of Depressive Symptoms Following a Natural Disaster

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ABSTRACT. The present study examined the relationship between children's coping styles (Spirito, Stark, & Williams, 1988) and self-reported levels of depressive symptoms (Kovacs, 1983) following a major stressor. 257 third- to fifth-grade children consented to participate in the study, 5 months following a hurricane. The number of coping strategies employed was positively related to depression scores, whereas coping efficacy was negatively related to depression scores. Social withdrawal, self-blaming, and emotional regulation were associated with more severe depressive symptoms. Lower levels of symptomatology were found among children who sought social support and engaged in cognitive restructuring. The overall symptom level in the sample did not exceed that of normative samples. Results are discussed in terms of competing theories of childhood depression.

THE NEGATIVE SEQUELAE of either man-made or natural trauma in children are well documented (Garmezy, 1986; Terr, 1991). For example, Kinzie, Sack, Angell, Manson, and Rath (1986) studied Cambodian children who