

Helping My Child Stay Calm Through Thunderstorms.



Springtime and summer are notorious for daily thunderstorms. It is not uncommon for storms to cause fear and anxiety in a child— reluctance to leave the house, go outdoors, or perpetual checking of the weather. Here are some tips to help your child cope and even learn to appreciate thunder and lightning.

Before The Storm:

Discuss with your child how they feel about storms before a storm is anywhere in sight.

- **Discuss what parts they like and dislike about storms.** Be open and listen, make sure the child feels understood rather than minimizing the fear.
- **Explain what is happening during a storm.** Understanding what causes a storm can decrease anxiety. Use simple books or videos to explain what is happening (screen ahead of time to make sure they don't fixate on the damage storms can cause).
- **Make a safety plan for the next storm.** Talk about what you can do to stay safe during a storm if you are outside, or at home, and what things you can do to provide comfort.
- **Role Play.** Replicate a thunderstorm that they have control over by making thunder with pots and pans, flashing lights for lighting, or using a white noise app. Practice your safety plan in this setting. Use some of the examples from shandyclinic.com/understandingstorms to help your child understand what causes thunder and lightning.



During the Storm



- Stay calm, warm, and reassuring. Provide extra smiles, snuggles, and your presence.
- Talk through the safety plan and reassure them that they are safe and you are there to take care of them.
- If the sound of thunder is what makes your child nervous look at shandyclinic.com/tooloud for a tool kit of sensory suggestions to help your child manage loud noises.
- If your child is no longer in panic, ask what they would like to do to feel better. (Build a pillow fort, make a snack or warm drink, watch the storm together as a family, read a story).

After the Storm

- Reassure them the storm is over, show the sun or the storm moving away on the weather radar, and positively go back to 'business as usual'.
- TV and news stations can talk about destruction from storms repeatedly. Limit exposure to media coverage to decrease unnecessary anxiety about the event.

