

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/preparedbc/emergency-mommy/writing-a-disaster-love-letter>

Writing a Disaster Love Letter

I was a news reporter for more than 10 years before jumping ship to government communications. I figured I could write about pretty much anything. God knows I had cranked out thousands of column inches on fall fairs, unusual pets, court cases, council meetings, elections. You name it, I covered it.

But I was stumped last year when my daughter's Kindergarten teacher asked for a comfort letter to go with her personal school earthquake kit. The request was simple: "Please provide a short note for your child in case of an emergency." The writing of the note — not so simple.

I had a really tough time with this one and actually got a bit emotional about it. One of my greatest fears is being separated from my daughter during a major earthquake or emergency. A mother's instinct is to protect and provide comfort. It's a bit agonizing to think you may not be there to do just that.

I started by researching comfort letters online. I found most were geared toward older kids or way too flowery (I'm just not a rainbows and lollipops kinda gal). But after some reading and mulling, I pulled together a few basic, common sense tips. Here are my nuts & bolts suggestions for getting started:

- **Keep it age appropriate:** The note needs to be at your child's level. Getting philosophical or going poetically over-the-top will miss the mark with most youngsters. Remember, this is for your child, not a Pulitzer Prize nomination.
- **Sound like yourself:** Your child wants to hear from you, not a template. They'll definitely know something's up if the note doesn't sound like mom or dad.
- **Include personal details:** Pick an in-joke, a special nickname, something you share exclusively with your child. These are familiar and comforting for little ones.
- **Keep it short:** This isn't the time for War & Peace. If your child can't read yet, caregivers will be your voice, and depending on the situation, they won't have time to regurgitate lengthy epistles.
- **Be reassuring:** This one's tough, since it's difficult to know what a full-scale emergency may look like. But do your best to sound calm and let them know you or other family members will be with them as soon as possible. The most important thing is that they don't feel alone.
- **Lay the groundwork:** The best way to help your child cope with disasters is to [talk about them before they happen](#). Knowledge is power. Your child will be less anxious if they understand what emergencies are and what they should do

when one occurs. Your comfort note will simply provide an extra boost of reassurance.

If your school or daycare hasn't requested comfort notes to go with a personal earthquake or emergency kit, it might be something to suggest. They're tough to pen, but a great addition. So happy writing...and I defy even the most cynical of moms (of which I consider myself one) not to tear up.

What I wrote ...

My precious girl:

Today is an unusual day and some scary things may be happening right now, but mommy and daddy are on their way to hold, kiss and squeeze you tight.

Until then, be a brave girl like we know you can. Listen carefully to your teachers, help your friends and know that we're thinking about you this very second.

We love, love, love you to bits and pieces (so small you can't even see them with a microscope!). Just hang tight. Everything's going to be okay.

Hugs and kisses...infinity.

Love always, Mommy and Daddy