Creating a preparedness stockpile for and with kids

As a parent, you want to make sure your kids are just as prepared for an emergency as you are. Being without electricity, refrigeration, clean tap water or phone service can be nerve-wracking for kids, especially if they don’t have everything they need. One of the first steps in being prepared is having an emergency stockpile at home that you can make for — and with — your kids.

Get your kids involved

As an adult, preparing for a disaster and knowing what to do is a lot easier for you than it is for kids. When children’s daily routines are disrupted by a disaster, they cannot cope and respond on their own. They rely on adults to keep them safe.

Nothing can build confidence like being involved — and getting prepared for an emergency is no different. This comes down to making preparedness fun and engaging for your children so that the threat of a disaster isn’t as scary. Kids can experience stress when they do not understand what a dangerous situation is like. Let them know that disasters are scary and that it is ok to be afraid when thinking about disasters, but reassure them that many caring adults — parents, teachers, first responders, police and emergency medical services personnel — will be working to keep them safe.

Sit down with your kids and talk about everything you might need if there is a disaster. You can make a game to see how many ideas each kid can come up with, just so it’s more fun. Go over the different types of disasters and explain why you need certain items for each.

Instead of packing a bag for your kids, you can build your emergency supply kit together. Make stockpiling a bonding activity by having you kids make a list of what your family needs and then shopping for supplies together. You can turn stockpile shopping into a “quest” or fun scavenger hunt.
What to shop for with your children

All Americans should have at least a three-day supply of food and water stored in their homes, with at least one gallon of water per person per day. If you have the space, experts recommend a week’s supply of food and water. Remember that kids also have unique nutritional needs — they require more fluids pound for pound than adults. This means you should stock up on plenty of water to make sure kids will stay hydrated.

When shopping, tell your kids that foods requiring refrigeration are off limits. You should only stockpile non-perishable food items. Children can be picky eaters, so choose food you know they will eat. Look for foods such as canned fruits and vegetables, canned meat and fish, low-sodium soups, canned pasta, granola bars, nuts, and dried cereal. You can also buy bread, peanut butter and jelly to make a classic PB&J sandwich — a family favorite! If your kids try to sneak soda, salty snacks or lots of junk food into the shopping cart, put them back on the shelf. Soda won’t hydrate you and salty junk foods can make you thirstier. Remember that you are also going to need a manual can opener and eating utensils, so put those into the cart as well.

Building your stockpile

Aside from food, your stockpile should also contain flashlights, a radio, batteries and copies of important documents. Adults should take care of important documents, cash, medications, medical equipment and any other sharp objects. Make sure to include a first-aid kit with bandages and antiseptics for scrapes along the way. Include things in your stockpile that kids will find comfort in, like a toy or stuffed animal. Add some games as well to pass the time.