

Helping Children Cope with Tragedy

In the wake of the recent tragedy in Oklahoma City, many child care professionals and parents were confronted with the difficult task of explaining the situation to children. While it is never easy to talk to a child about tragedy, methods for doing so are critical. The National Association for the Education of Young Children provides a list of suggestions for helping children cope with the Oklahoma tragedy. The list could likely be applied to any crisis situation.

1. **Do not expose young children to television or radio broadcasts about the disaster.** But don't say, "I don't want you to watch this," which only creates anxiety. Instead, provide alternative activities. If children do see televised images of the disaster, reassure them that it happened far from where they live.

2. **Convey stability and calm.** Children react strongly to the feelings of the adults around them, particularly parents and teachers. Even very young children pick up adults' uncertainty, anxiety, and grief. Since denying our distress only makes children more anxious, parents and teachers should acknowledge that they're feeling sad and upset about an explosion in a faraway city.

Tuning in to the general distress of trusted adults, children may experience a general feeling of not being safe, a fear that their parents might leave them. Seeing adults talking in anxious and worried tones fuels such feelings in children. It's natural for distressed adults to want to talk to one another, and we need to do so. But we should not talk among ourselves in children's presence. Scariest of all is seeing adults huddle together, obviously talking about something (or watching something) that they don't want children to hear or see.

3. **With respect to what particular children need in a particular situation, take your cues from the children themselves.** Don't initiate discussions with the children about the event. Many of the children may not be aware of the disaster at all, others only dimly so, and perhaps one or two children may have seen or heard something that has caused them anxiety. Watch the children at play. Young children are more likely to let us know what they have seen or heard - and how they're feeling about it - through their play rather than through their words. If their behavior or words make

you think they are trying to deal with the event, ask questions in a low-key manner. Ask what they know, what they have seen or heard, and respond accordingly. Children need most to feel that the situation is under control.

Twenty Ways to Make Your Kid Feel Great

1. Show unconditional love.
2. Express your anger responsibly.
3. Make clear requests.
4. Learn to listen.
5. Take your child's feelings seriously.
6. Validate your child's existence.
7. Find something to appreciate daily.
8. Spend time alone with your child.
9. Allow your child to do things for himself.
10. Respect your child's possessions.
11. Respect your child's opinion.
12. Acknowledge your child's abilities.
13. Respect your child's choices.
14. Teach children that they are more than just their body.
15. Intervene when your child puts himself down.
16. Express love non-verbally.
17. Speak to your child at eye level.
18. Avoid mixed messages.
19. Share your feelings.
20. Focus on each child's uniqueness.

For Children Ways to Avoid Peer Pressure

1. Learn positive self-talk.
2. Challenge the system.
3. Stop living for compliments.
4. Don't build relationships to be popular.
5. Respect yourself.
6. Don't compare yourself with others.
7. Develop strong relationships with your parents.
8. Take inventory of past peer pressure decisions.
9. Develop faith in your ability to solve your own problems.
10. Become a thermostat, not a thermometer.
11. Don't limit your self-image to your physical appearance and abilities.
12. Replace blame with responsibility.

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School's Out! Summer Safety Checklist For Parents & Children

Sometimes during the summer it is necessary to leave children home alone while you are working or away for some other reason. Here are some suggestions to increase the safety of your child and ease your mind while your child is alone. (Keep in mind, it is generally believed that children under the age of 12 should not be left alone regularly or for any length of time.

1. Agree on ground rules for times when you are not home (cooking, leaving the house, having friends over).
2. Assign your children tasks to accomplish while you're gone.
3. Be sure to have telephone numbers posted (where you can be reached, fire and police, neighbor, relative).
4. If they will arrive home to an empty house, be sure to call and check in with them.
5. Enroll them in a course on safety procedures for children. Their safety is related to their knowledge of how to protect themselves. (Girl scouts, Boy Scouts, your local hospital, or the YMCA may offer courses.)
6. Talk to your children about their concerns when they are home alone.
7. Remember, with the proper guidelines, being home for limited periods of time can increase independence, responsibility, and confidence in your children.

When was Your Last Check-up?

The Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP) provides health and dental check-ups by trained medical staff to:

- help people stay healthy
- find health problems early
- answer health questions

You are eligible if you are: on Medi-Cal and are under 21 years old. If a health problem is found, Medi-Cal will pay for treatment. You are also eligible if you have a low/moderate income and are under 19 years old. Call CHDP to see if you qualify.

All CHDP Health Check-ups include:

- vision test
- hearing test
- nutrition test
- immunizations (shots)
- teeth and gum check
- lab tests
- health information

Get a CHDP check-up for:

- Well-Baby care
- Well-Child care
- School entry
- Sports/camp physical
- Teen check-ups
- Regular check-ups

For more information, call,

- Your doctor or clinic
- The Child Health and Disability Prevention Program (CHDP)

CALL NOW! (310) 940-7985

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Communication Tips For Parents & Kids

"You never listen to me" is a complaint heard as often from children as parents. Good communication helps children and parents to develop confidence, feelings of self-worth, and good relationships with others. Try these tips:

- Teach children to listen... gently touch a child before you talk... say their name.
- Speak in a quiet voice... sometimes so children have to listen... they like this.
- Look a child in the eyes so you can tell when they understand...bend or sit down...become the child's size.
- Practice listening and talking: talk with your family about what you see on TV, hear on the radio or see at the park or store. (Talk with your children about school and their friends.)
- Respect children and use a courteous tone of voice. If we talk to our children as we would our friends, our youngsters may be more likely to seek us out as confidants.
- Catch children and teens being good. Praise them for cooperating with you or their siblings, or for doing those little things that are so easy to take for granted.
- Use door openers that invite children to say more about an incident or their feelings. "I see", "Oh", Tell me more.
- Children are never too old to be told they are loved. Saying "I love you" is important.
- Give your undivided attention when your kids want to talk to you. Don't read or watch TV.

Tips for Shopping With Your Child What to do in the Store to Help Children Behave... Without Spanking, Hitting, or Yelling

Anyone who has shopped at a grocery store or a mall with children, especially young children, knows the experience can sometimes be trying and highly stressful. Here are some steps that can change potential misery into potential mastery of shopping with kids.

Plan Ahead

Explain the rules

Before entering the store make your expectations clear, such as "stay close to me," "use your quiet voice," and "no begging for candy." Select a secret word or signal that you can both use to get the immediate attention of the other. Role play at home in how to act at the store.

Agree on rewards for good behavior

Keep it simple such as choice of a favorite snack, or a stop at the park. Promise to read a story or play a game at home. "When we leave, you can select a package of gum if you remember the rules."

Pack a treat

Bring a nutritious snack for the child to eat during the shopping trip (raisins, cut up apples, nuts, etc.). Bring a storybook for the child to look at. Keep a supply of little action figures or small manipulative toys handy. Bring a favorite blanket, toy or book from home to help make the child feel secure. For a small child, tie a favorite soft toy to the handle of the shopping cart or stroller. Bring a pad

and pencil or magic marker for the child to use while you are shopping.

Check emotions

Is your child too tired or hungry to shop? Are you? If yes, postpone your trip or find a sitter for your child(ren). Go when you are rested. As well as when the child is rested. Don't wait until the end of a tiring day.

At the Store

Make a game out of shopping

Who can see the bananas? Who can see the potatoes first? Do you remember what animal bacon comes from? Let count all the tennis shoes we see on people's feet. Let's see how many Bs you can find on signs. Let's guess how much something is going to cost. Sing songs. Make up a silly one together about spinach or broccoli. Play "I see something" - Then ask your child what it is. Give hints to challenge the imagination. Describe a food in the cart and have children guess the food.

More games

Discuss the pictures on the package - what you could make with this, etc. Let the child see how many things one can do with a certain item. (How many things can you make out of tomato paste?) Find five things on each aisle that start with the letter B, are red, are in cans, are for eating, etc. Have the child help you name all the vegetables in the cart, all the meats, breads, fruits, milk products, etc. Count how many steps it takes to get from the Cherrios to the Frosted Flakes. Do "quiet cheers" at the check-out stand, spelling each child's name (give me an A (A), give me an M (M), etc. While waiting in line, retell your child's favorite story having the child chime in on the verses he or she knows.

Give children some choices

When possible, allow your child to make some decisions. Blue or red

socks? Chocolate or vanilla ice cream? Be prepared to bargain or compromise. *Give child a responsibility.* Help select the hardest apples, find the cheapest green beans, match the coupons with the labels. If the child is old enough, let him or her check the grocery list or see which fruit, cheese, etc., is the best bargain.

Praise your child

"You are being so helpful." A hug can be reassuring and say more than words at times. Reinforce appropriate behavior. Talk with the child, play and engage the child in the decision-making process. Encourage the child to talk, watch, listen and think.

If All Else Fails...

Remember: Kids will be kids; they are not perfect. Of course, neither are we, but we are the adults. Ignore inappropriate behavior unless it becomes dangerous, destructive, annoying to others, or truly embarrassing. Don't let the child think that you will allow him or her to misbehave in public. Remove a child who is out of control. Take him or her to the restroom or out of the store. Tell the child quietly, eye-to-eye that the behavior is absolutely unacceptable. Wait, saying nothing at all, for the child to calm down. Then ask if he or she is ready to try again. Go home if the child cannot calm down. If the shopping cannot wait, find a sitter and return alone. Tell the child you will have to leave him or her at home next time - then do it. Don't ever buy the child treat when he or she has thrown a fit.

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