

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS-RELATED FEELINGS

1. Talk with your child; provide simple, accurate answers to questions.
2. Talk with your child about your own feelings.
3. Listen to what your child says and how your child says it. Does the child display fear, anxiety, or insecurity? Your repeating the child's words can be very helpful. Use such phrases as "You are afraid that...." or "You wonder if...." This helps both you and the child clarify feelings.
4. Reassure your child. For example, tell the child, "We are together. I care about you, and I will take care of you."
5. You may need to repeat information and reassurances to your child many times. Do not stop responding just because you told the child something once.
6. Hold your child. Provide comfort. Touching is important for children during crises.
7. Spend extra time putting your child to bed; talk and offer reassurance. Leave a nightlight on if necessary.
8. Observe your child at play. Listen to what your child says, and watch how your child plays. Frequently children express feelings of fear or anger while playing with dolls, toy trucks, or friends.
9. Provide play experiences to relieve tension. Work with Play-Doh, paint pictures, play in water, and the like. If children display a need to hit or kick, give them something safe, such as a pillow or a ball.
10. If your child has an especially meaningful toy or blanket, allow the child to rely on it somewhat more than usual.
11. If you need professional assistance, seek it early to maximize its benefits.

(Mental Health Corporation of Denver: 4/17/95)