



HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH CRISIS

Crisis situations such as war, bombings, and earthquakes can dominate the news in graphic detail and be frightening to children of all ages. While adults attempt to sort out details and practice selective listening skills, children do not have this ability. Issues such as war and peace, terrorism, and acts of nature are abstract terms that are difficult for children to understand. Children respond to the emotions and reactions of the adults closest to them. It is important that children see that the adults they trust are in control.

However you choose to cope with a crisis situation near home or in the media, children need to know that the adults in their lives are in control and are there to keep them safe. This may be a time to refocus as a family. Take some walks, go on a picnic, read favorite stories aloud, and reaffirm the self-worth of all individuals.

One of the first steps in helping children cope with and make sense of any situation is to listen and respond to the child's questions; not to your fears. Children need explanations in concrete terms that they can identify with. When there is a crisis in another city, state, or country, school age children may find it helpful to look up those areas on a map or globe. One should also remember to present information in a matter of fact way. "Gas masks help people breathe. They do not have to be worn forever."



Young Children & School-Agers:

Do not let children watch television or listen to a radio news program alone. An adult should be there to interpret the news and answer questions. Be selective in television viewing. In reference to situations of war and/or terrorism, try to explain that people

worldwide want peace, have families and children they care about, and the same needs and fears.

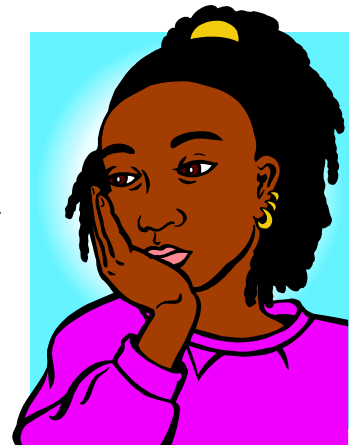
If war is currently taking place and greatly publicized, it is normal to see more war games being played among children. You might want to expand

war play by discussing the kinds of things military personnel do, besides fighting, such as developing secret codes, exercising to stay physically fit, team work, learning how to read maps, helping people, etc.

Having children draw pictures or write stories about their fears might be one way to help them feel they have some control over their emotions. Do not belittle their fears and questions. Reassure children that just because they are afraid, does not mean they are in danger. Participating in a specific activity is another way to help children feel a sense of control in a confusing world. Children can write letters, send drawings or even organize a donation drive to help crisis victims.

Junior High & High School:

Junior high and high school aged children may also be concerned about crisis situations near home and abroad. It is important that adults recognize and support these children's emerging beliefs about life, death, religion, war, and peace. Providing a sympathetic non-judgmental ear is the most beneficial course of action.



Along with the activities listed for younger children, teenagers may also wish to participate in a local blood drive campaign. Anyone 17 to 66 years who is in good health and weighs over 110 pounds may give blood. Children 15 to 17 years may give blood with written parental consent. Children under 15 may give blood with written consent from a parent and written authorization of a physician.

Parents and child care providers can contact their local library, children's teachers and area referral & resource agency for reading materials and/or book suggestions.

For more information, please call (925) 417-8733 or visit www.childcarelinks.org