

# The Children's Room

*Center for Grieving Children and Teenagers, Inc.*

## Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Stressful Life Events

During difficult times there are opportunities for children and adolescents to develop and strengthen coping skills that will help them throughout their lifetime.

Adults can help children and teens by:

- Providing a safe place for children to share their feelings and concerns in a non-judgmental environment. Listen, Listen, Listen. We can be supportive as each child finds their own unique coping skills and ways to express themselves.
- Providing truthful and age-appropriate information about the specific situation. Every situation is unique and raises specific issues. Be honest with children and teens about what has happened and what is happening. This builds trust.
- Letting children know that there is nothing too sad or too difficult to share with a trusted adult. "We are here for you. You are not alone."
- Being there for them as they experience their pain rather than trying to shield them from pain.
- Acknowledging and validating all feelings. Everyone grieves in their own way and in their own time.
- Allowing children and teens to ask the questions that they want answered; this helps clear up misconceptions and misinformation. They need us to listen to them carefully so we can understand how they are feeling and they need.
- Being authentic and sharing our feelings with them. Children learn by watching how we deal with stressful life events. They pick up cues from us and the other adults in their lives.
- Listening to children's fears and worries. Magical thinking can reflect an inappropriate sense of responsibility for what is happening. Watch out for the "If onlys".
- Setting limits. We need to help our children and teens express themselves with positive and healthy coping skills. Care, consistency and continuity give our children a sense of safety.
- Encouraging our children to help others. We all feel better if we can do something.

Caring support for grieving children, teenagers, and their families.

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[www.childrensroom.org](http://www.childrensroom.org)