

Helping Your Children Through A Crisis: Important Tips for Parents

Here are some tips for helping you to help your child deal with the crisis:

1. Listen with interest, openness, and acceptance. Encourage them to tell you about their experience. Be prepared for your children to talk sporadically about the tragedy, displaying a need to have small conversations again and again.
2. Spend extra time with them yet balance togetherness with private time or time that isn't oriented around the crisis.
3. Reassure them that they are safe and the Lord will carry them (and your family) through this.
4. Help them with every day tasks and have extra patience, as concentration may be difficult.
5. Accept that life will go on and try to maintain a normal routine when possible.
6. Ask, "What can I do to be helpful?"
7. Try to accept their anger or other negative responses with understanding.
8. Acknowledge that family members will grieve and feel differently. Give one another permission to express differing, even opposing emotions.

This is not the time to argue or be critical. Avoid saying how lucky they are that it wasn't worse and don't push for significant decisions. Symptoms will usually subside and disappear in time without much effort, but persistent difficulties indicate a need for counseling. Do not focus on emotional or behavioral reactions and don't criticize your child because of them.

Your children will be vulnerable and hurt for a period of time. If these signs of stress do not begin to lessen within a few weeks, or if they intensify, seek further help. You may not understand what they are going through, but offer your support and love. You probably have a great deal in common with your son or daughter, but allow for differences within the family throughout the grief process.

Even though it is upsetting, this is an opportunity to nurture your child's faith. Talk about God, faith, sin, responsibility, forgiveness, and trust. Read Bible passages together (e.g. Psalms), pray, and ask questions of one another. Make God a central anchor in your family as together you ride out the storm.

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