

Helping Children & Teens Cope

During difficult times there are opportunities for children and teens 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/teens to share their feelings and concerns in a nonjudgmental environment. Listen, Listen, Listen. We can be supportive as each child/teen 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/teens 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 feelings rather than trying to shield them from feelings.

Acknowledging and validating all feelings. Everyone grieves in their own way and 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 what they need.

Being authentic and sharing our own feelings with them. Children/teens 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/teen's fears and worries. Sometimes children and teens have a sense of responsibility for something that was out of their control. This is called "magical thinking" and can reflect an inaccurate sense of responsibility for what has happened. 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/teens to practice self-care and help others. Sometimes we feel better if we can do something.