



A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Address My Child's Fears?

Tom Lee answers:*

Children's fears and worries are very real to them. Consider these tips to help your children gain a sense of control.

- Be a good listener so children will feel comfortable talking to you. Then when they have concerns or worries, they will come to you.
- Help children express their fears. Listen to and accept their feelings without minimizing them or being unduly concerned. With younger children, this may include providing materials to draw a picture or encouraging them to act out an event.
- Tell your children the truth about scary things. "The shot will hurt for a little while." "It might be scary to see grandma's body in the casket when we go to the funeral."
- Provide books about other children experiencing fears. "Ira Sleeps Over" or "There's a Nightmare in My Closet" are some of the classic children's books dealing with fears.
- Suggest things your children can do to cope with fears rather than telling them there's nothing to be afraid of, or to "stop acting like a baby."
- Help children practice problem solving. One five step process includes relaxing, identifying the problem, outlining the options, rating possible outcomes, then choosing the best solution.
- Model good problem solving yourself. Share ways that you make everyday decisions with your children.

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