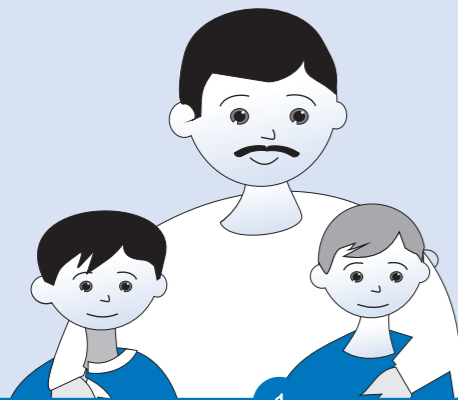


Be a Model:

You first! To take care of children and teens, it is important that you nurture yourself. Take time for yourself with friends, faith, music, and creative outlets. Try to eat right and exercise. Seek alone time and quietness. Taking just 10 minutes each day for YOU can really help!

Talk about your feelings with people you trust; ask for help when you need it. Children often get worried when the adults around them are worried. If you can stay genuinely calm and positive, this will go a long way in reassuring your children. Taking care of yourself will help you to be there for your children.



1

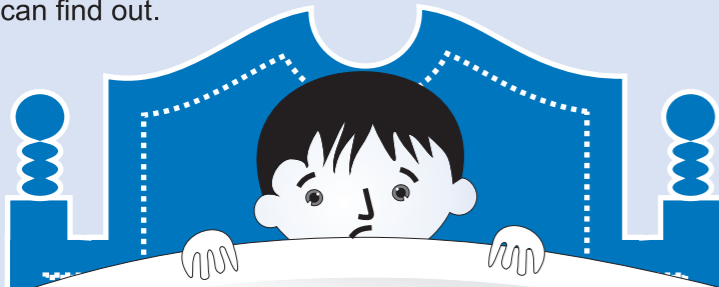


What You Might Notice:

When something is worrying a child, they tend to 'show' us rather than 'tell' us. Children may seem sad, spacey, or irritable, or they may have physical complaints like headaches, stomachs and sleep problems. For children who survived the Gaza war, difficult memories can come back as nightmares, scary thoughts, or a wave of anxiety.

Sights, smells or sounds can bring back powerful feelings associated with the original event. This is normal and usually recedes with time. It can be a cause for concern, though, when children seem trapped in the past, plagued by bad feelings, stuck, not enjoying even the things they used to.

Younger children often don't have words for their feelings – sometimes they just repeat what they've heard; you need to really 'look and listen' to learn what they're feeling. Here are some ways you can find out.



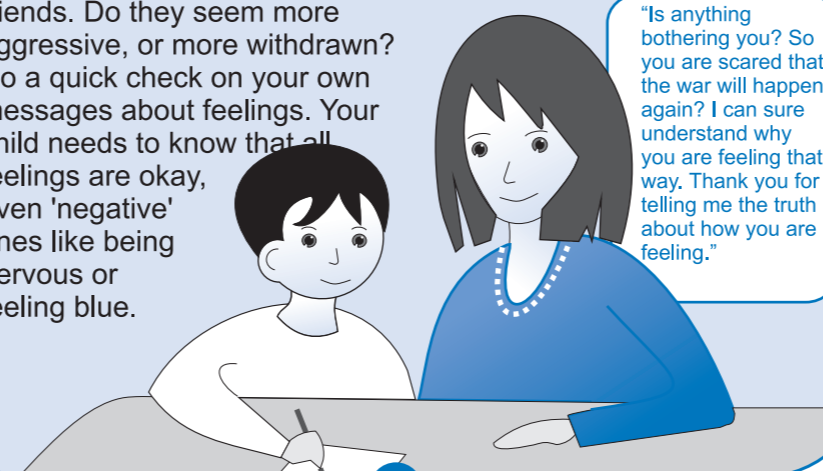
2

Listen for Feelings:

Telling stories: Ask your child to tell you a story - listen for hints of worry or anxiety, or make up a story with your child - they make up part of it - you make up part of it.

Draw pictures and play with younger children. If they are allowed to 'direct the action,' often what is on their mind emerges. If your child seems sad or anxious, ask them if there is anything wrong.

Notice changes in children's behavior, and keep an eye on how they are getting along with their friends. Do they seem more aggressive, or more withdrawn? Do a quick check on your own messages about feelings. Your child needs to know that all feelings are okay, even 'negative' ones like being nervous or feeling blue.



3

ANTICIPATORY ANXIETY

Helping Children and Teens Cope with War/ Violence: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers

Anticipatory anxiety:

Anticipatory anxiety means anticipating a traumatic event (such as the Gaza war) to happen again in circumstances similar to the ones when the original event happened. Anticipatory anxiety happens when there are signs that indicate the approaching of such critical times. For example, people can become very worried and scared to experience the same traumatic event when identical weather conditions occur, or political situations or military actions take place that are similar to actions that happened during the war (deployment of tanks or intensification of warplane flights).

Provide Support:

These are some techniques that might help if children seem tense, worried, or anxious:

Spend more time with them (games, sports, art, etc.) when they seem sad or scared.

For anxious children, try 'soothing' activities: taking a bath, hugging, reading a book, or listening to music.

Keep a regular schedule for eating, going to bed/waking up, and bathing.

If this is important in your life, share your spiritual beliefs with your children.

If a younger child is upset, consider distractions such as singing a familiar song, counting backwards, or reciting the alphabet.

Allow children and teens to make choices about meals, activities, and clothes to wear.

You might say:

"You are finding ways to feel better."

"Did you notice how you helped yourself get through that?"

"You must feel proud..."

4

Relaxing the Body:

Find a quiet, comfortable area and encourage the child to sit back, and take deep breaths. If a specific area of the child's body is tight, have them tense that area for 5 seconds, then relax it. You may want to repeat this exercise a few times for the specific area of the child's body, or you can tense and relax the whole body from the feet to the head. Help the child notice the difference between being tense and being relaxed.

You might say:

"Now take a deep breath and hold it while I count to five, and keep your tummy real tight, squeeze it... one...two...three...four...five. Now, breathe out through the mouth and let your tummy relax... go soft... that feels so much better now. Concentrate on feeling nice and loose and relaxed. Let the tummy stay more relaxed for a while now..."



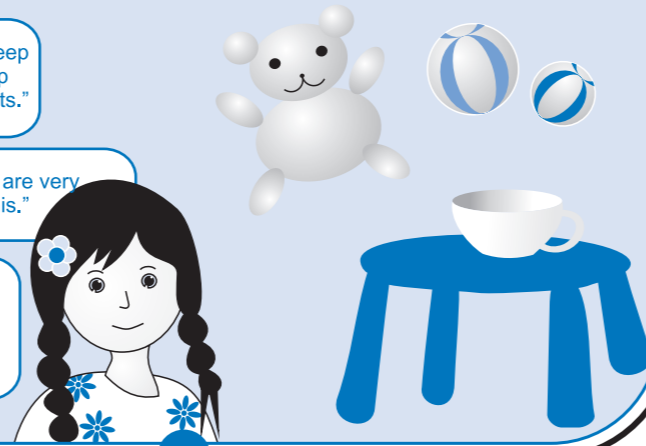
Grounding in the Present:

This technique is useful when children are in the grip of strong emotions and memories. Encourage the child to take slow, deep breaths and to sit down comfortably. Have children look around the room and report on what they see, what they hear, and what they smell. You might go first, saying something like "I see a blue cup on the table," or "I hear someone talking in the distance." Suggest that they touch something nearby this might be a piece of jewelry, a favorite stuffed animal, the padded arm of a chair, or a pet.

"Remember to take deep breaths. This can help slow down the thoughts."

"Your mind and body are very strong. You can do this."

"It will be OK. This will pass." "I am right here with you. I will help to keep you safe."



Grounding in the Present:

Suggest that the child breathe in very slow, deep breaths through the nose so that their belly blows up like a balloon. Then let the air flow out slowly through the mouth, allowing the body to become more and more relaxed. Count out ten slow, gentle breaths. 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10 Encourage children to breathe this way whenever they are feeling stress.



You might say:

"Many people, from Olympic athletes to famous musicians, use deep breathing to feel calmer."

A Safe Place:



Together, decide on a special place your child can go when they feel upset. Even small or temporary homes usually have a nook or cranny that appeals to a child. It could be as simple as a colorful chair with some blankets or stuffed animals nearby. Suggest that your child imagine a peaceful place. Have them close their eyes and bring to mind an image. This could be on a beach, in their bedroom, or on your lap. Help the child imagine what this beautiful place might look like, feel like, sound like, & smell like.



Plan for Safety:

The war was terrible. While we hope we won't experience anything like it again, it still might happen. The best recipe for helping children feel safe is to make sure they are safe. Planning and preparedness is an important part of that. Create a family evacuation plan. Everyone in your family should know who goes with whom, where they'll be going, and what things will be brought. Use your community disaster guidelines to help in your planning. Be prepared so an evacuation is called, you and your family can quickly assemble; pack up your pre-agreed critical belongings and leave.



Provide Support:

These are some techniques that might help if children seem tense, worried, or anxious: Spend more time with them (games, sports, art, etc.) when they seem sad or scared. For anxious children, try 'soothing' activities: taking a bath, hugging, reading a book, or listening to music. Keep a regular schedule for eating, going to bed/waking up, and bathing. If this is important in your life, share your spiritual beliefs with your children. If a younger child is upset, consider distractions such as singing a familiar song, counting backwards, or reciting the alphabet. Allow children and teens to make choices about meals, activities, and clothes to wear.

You might say:

"You are finding ways to feel better."

"Did you notice how you helped yourself get through that?" "You must feel proud..."