

TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT CRISIS SITUATIONS

One of the jobs of being a parent is to help children deal with their feelings in situations of crisis. Every child will have different feelings and reactions in response to stressful events, but those feelings will probably include emotions related to a sense of loss or a fear of loss of control and loss of stability.

These feelings can include:

Denial: Children may not want to admit that what is happening is important or affects them. A child may say, "What's the big deal?"

Anger: Angry statements and actions may increase. Tantrums, outbursts, arguing and fighting may be more common.

Depression: Children may cry more often or seem more sad or withdrawn than usual.

Acceptance: A sense that even though events are bad, life goes on, or still has some good parts that may also occur.

Not every child will experience all these feelings. The feelings will not always happen in this order, occur only once, or be experienced for the same amount of time to the same degree.

SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO to help your child during this period:

- Set aside some time to talk, but more especially to listen.
- Discuss strategies you both can use to make things better (e.g., find out the facts, what to do to feel calm, who to talk to for answers to various questions).
- Acknowledge that these events are difficult and possibly frightening.
- Expect that resolving all the feelings related to events could take your child some time. Feelings will vary and might be expressed at unexpected times.
- It is normal for a child of any age to bring up events long after they've occurred.
- Check out your child's reactions. Most reactions will be at a level similar to their peers.
- If you think your child's response is extreme, seek help. You can reach me at 206-252-3534 or by e-mail: jmurray@seattleschools.org.