

“Will They Fly A Plane Into Our House?”

How To Talk To Children About Terrorism

By Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph. D.



Cover & Design by Robin C. Morris

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By Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.

Author of: An Ounce of Prevention:

How To Stop Childhood Emotional & Behavioral Problems Before They Start

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Introduction

I have written many books for children, parents, and counselors to help them deal with different kinds of problems. But until September 11, 2001, it never occurred to me to write a book about talking to children about terrorism. Now, tragically, one is needed.

I know that children are worried, and for some children this worry will not go away. I saw this in 1991, during the Desert Storm operation, when I treated and talked to many children who were consumed with anxiety about being attacked by Iraq. They were particularly worried about biochemical weapons that they barely understood. They thought that the very water they drank and the air they breathed would be poisoned. Operation Desert Storm took place in a land many thousands of miles away, but children always personalize their fear. To some children the war might as well have been in their backyards.

As I write a week after the attack, for children around the country, and particularly for those children in the New York, and Washington D.C. metropolitan areas and in western Pennsylvania, the war is in their backyards. Every child will react in a different way, and concerned adults—parents, teachers, and counselors—must help them communicate and cope.

Which Children Are At Risk?

This book was not written for children who lost a parent or a close loved one in the terrorist attack on September 11. Those children and their families will need in-depth support and grief counseling. Fortunately, these services are being provided by agencies, schools, and private individuals throughout the country. If you need help in finding these services, you should contact your local chapter of the American Red Cross, which is listed in your local phone book, or on their Web site, www.RedCross.org.

This book is primarily intended to help parents, teachers, and counselors of school-age children who did not experience the loss of someone close to them, but who are still at risk for prolonged anxiety reactions.

Some of these children may already be showing symptoms of anxiety. These symptoms include:

- Nightmares
- Excessive worry
- Anxiety about being away from the home or school
- Anxiety about going to school
- Stomach aches, headaches, or other recurring physical complaints
- A sudden change in eating or sleep habits

Other children may not show obvious symptoms. In studying children who have been exposed to trauma, we know that sometimes the effects of the trauma are not immediately apparent. It may be months and even years before children begin to show signs of trouble.

For this reason, we must identify those children who are at risk for later problems even though they are not presently showing symptoms.

Stress in children as well as adults is cumulative. In other words, the more stress in a child's life, the more likely that he or she will experience some mental health problems. Stress factors related to anxiety disorders include:

- A divorce or parental separation within the last year
- A history of shyness, fears, and anxieties
- Prolonged separation from parents due to military service or business trips
- A new baby in the house
- Parental illness
- The recent loss of someone close to the child (grandparent, relative, or a pet)
- Social isolation (particularly due to teasing at school)
- A recent move to a new neighborhood or school
- A childhood illness that requires hospitalization

There may be other stresses as well.

If you have or know children who are affected by even one of the factors mentioned above, then you should pay particular attention to their reaction to the recent terrorist attack.

What You Can Do To Decrease A Child's Stress and Anxiety

In the days after the attack, there have been many psychologists on television talking about the best way to help children in this difficult time. Hopefully, you have already taken their advice even as you are reading these words. These are the most important points to remember:

1. Reassure children about their personal safety. Help them understand that there are many thousands of people around the country who are trying to make sure that the country is safe.
2. Be aware of your own emotional reactions around your children. It is all right to share your feelings, but you must also show your children that you are in control of your emotions. Do not look to children for your emotional support.
3. Keep to a child's regular schedule as much as possible.
4. Don't let children watch too much television. Hearing about the events and seeing the tragic images over and over again will certainly raise their anxiety.
5. Make an effort to talk to your child more than usual. It doesn't have to be about recent events. Talking about anything at all makes children feel connected to their parents and this in turn brings a sense of security.

6. Seek help when you need it. There are many resources for families and children in your community. Don't hesitate to seek them out.
7. If possible postpone trips away from your children. Parental absence is the primary reason why children develop anxiety.
8. Don't direct your anger at the wrong people. The terrorist attacks were a result of the acts of a small group of people. Don't let children fall victim to the effects of prejudice and discrimination.
9. Encourage children to participate in helping activities like collecting food or clothing for those in need.

For other suggestions, please read Part I of this book, "Answering Parents' Questions".

Guidelines for Answering Children's Questions

In the second part of the book are my answers to the questions that I have heard children ask about terrorism in the last few days. Most of the questions come from children ages seven to twelve years old, so I have directed my answers to this group. Younger children may ask similar questions and you should try to answer them in words that they understand.

Primarily, I have just tried to write down the truth. This seems simple enough, but I know from experience that many parents are afraid to tell their children the truth. Parents don't want to see their children scared or worried. But the truth is not scary to children. In fact, children are much more adaptable to stress than most adults realize. As I will talk about later in this book, there are certainly things that upset children, but the truth is not one of them.

You may want to read my answers to your children or you may want to put things in your own words. You should do whatever makes you feel most comfortable.

What If Children Don't Ask Questions?

Many parents have told me that their children are not really asking questions about the events of September 11. These parents say that they are partly relieved that their children seem unaffected and partly concerned that they are hiding their feelings and worries.

There are three reasons why children five and older might not be asking questions:

1. In spite of their chronological age, they are emotionally immature and they don't really understand what is going on.
2. They are dealing with their anxiety through denial, the most common first reaction to a trauma.
3. They are so desensitized to violence that they don't really understand the significance of the events.

If your children are not asking questions because of the first two reasons, it is likely that they are just going through a delayed reaction. It is also likely that they will be asking more questions as the weeks and months go by.

If your children are not asking questions because these events seem unreal or unimportant to their day-to-day lives, then this is more of a problem. The current generation of children has seen more simulated violence than most adults can really grasp. Between television and video games, most American children have seen thousands of unspeakable acts of violence as part of their entertainment. It should not be surprising then that many children are desensitized to the images that they see on television, and cannot grasp that the violence they see on the news is real, and that real people were killed.

As one mother of a six-year-old said, "My son came into the room while I was watching a repeat of the video of the World Trade Towers coming down. His reaction was, 'That's cool! Look what that plane did!' I looked at him in horror, and said, 'That's a real event, not pretend. Many people died in that building. Mommies and daddies and aunts and uncles and grandparents, too.' He turned to me with a shocked look and with tears starting to form in his eyes. He just said, 'Oh,' and gave me a hug."

I believe that this mother had the right response to her child's comment. We cannot allow our children to be callous and uncaring. This was a terrible tragedy, and tears and sadness are appropriate. We must make a distinction between protecting our children and overprotecting our children. Sadness and concern are appropriate reactions by children to the recent events. Excessive worry and anxiety are not.

This Is A Unique Opportunity To Help Your Children

You have probably heard the Chinese saying: "In every crisis, there is also opportunity." I certainly believe that this is true in this situation and it is one of the main reasons that I have written this book.

For many years I have been urging parents to pay attention to the emotional needs of their children. In a book I wrote a few years ago (*How to Raise a Child with a High EQ: A Parents' Guide to Emotional Intelligence*, HarperPerennial, 1997), I noted how researchers have found that when children (and adults) have high emotional intelligence, they are happier, healthier, and even more successful. An important part of emotional intelligence is being able to deal with stress and difficult emotions. That is why it is particularly important to think about raising your children's emotional intelligence right now. To put it simply, children who have a high degree of emotional intelligence will have an easier time coping with recent terrorist attacks or trauma of any kind.

There is also evidence that children with emotional intelligence skills, which are similar to resiliency skills, will be more resistant to developing all kinds of problems in childhood, adolescence, and even as adults. Unfortunately, many parents don't realize that preventing emotional problems is just as much their job as the physical health and safety of their children. Parents are asking the question, "How can I prevent the news of this terrible tragedy from affecting or even traumatizing my children?" But I believe an even better question is: "What can I do today and every day to prepare my children for life's inevitable problems and to make sure that they are as self-reliant, responsible, and resilient as possible?"

The answer to this question is not as hard as you might think. In a recent book (*An Ounce of Prevention: How To Stop Emotional and Behavioral Problems Before They Start*, Quill Publishers, 2001), I wrote:

“Preventing emotional and behavioral problems requires more than just knowledge; it requires making prevention a parenting habit. Just as you make sure that your child is buckled up as soon as he gets into a car, or that she washes her hands before dinner, preventing mental health problems must become automatic. Prevention strategies that are only done occasionally, or are started and then neglected, rarely have the desired effect.”

I go on to say that preventing mental health problems needs to become a habit, like having your child brush his teeth or reading him a bedtime story. This can be done through simple activities which take just 10 or 15 minutes a day.

In the third part of this book are examples of what I mean by emotional intelligence activities. I have written activities for 10 emotional skills that children need to develop in order to cope better with a national trauma like the terrorist attack, or with a personal problem that is causing anxiety and worry.

The 10 emotional skills that will help children cope with stress are:

- How to recognize your feelings.
- How to communicate your feelings.
- How to make yourself happy when you are upset.
- How to make yourself feel safe and secure.
- How to calm yourself down when you are anxious or angry.
- How to understand and react appropriately to the feelings of others.
- How to make helping others a part of your daily life.
- How to have a positive attitude, even when bad things happen.
- How to ask for help when you need it.
- How to make good and responsible friends.

The activities in this book are designed to help children develop emotional intelligence skills which will help them with any kind of worry and anxiety. You should feel free to make photocopies of these activities to use with your children. If you are a teacher or counselor, you can make as many copies as you like to use in your work. You do not need copyright permission to photocopy any portion of this book for personal or professional use.

These are very confusing times for children as well as adults. I have written this book because I am trying to take the same advice that I have given to many others. Stay calm. Communicate your feelings. Reach out to others, particularly those in need. Find comfort in your family, your place of worship, and your community. Do what you do best.

Sincerely,

Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D.
September 17, 2001

Part I: Answers to Parents' Questions

These are some of the questions that I have been asked over the last few days. If you need help in answering other questions, seek advice from a counselor at your child's school or from a community mental health agency.

Q: What can I do to help keep my child from worrying about terrorism?

Most importantly, spend a lot of time with your child.

Other things that you can do include:

- Keep your child's schedule consistent.
- Know your community resources and use them if needed.
- Find your own help if you need it.
- Communicate.
- Openly express your affection to your child and those around you.
- Avoid arguing with your spouse.
- Do not use alcohol or drugs to make yourself feel better.
- Be truthful.
- Limit TV.
- Keep your child busy learning and doing productive activities.
- Foster a sense of tolerance and a sense of togetherness.
- Talk about what your child should do in an emergency.
- Find out what your school is doing.
- Find time for creative expression.
- Recognize your child's vulnerability to other problems.

Q: What are some signs that my child is having trouble?

Symptoms of anxiety disorders include:

- Recurring nightmares.
- Recurring thoughts.
- Extreme withdrawal, sadness, and a reluctance to do normal activities.
- Continued fearfulness when hearing about the trauma.
- Reluctance to go to school or to be away from parents.
- Extreme alertness, as if waiting for something bad to happen.

If you are concerned at all, seek professional guidance. Do not wait for symptoms to appear before you seek help.

Q: My 8-year-old child doesn't seem to be affected at all by the terrorist attack even though it is constantly on television and everyone in the family is talking about it. Is this a problem?

There are different reasons why a child may not want deal with his feelings. You should not force your child to talk about his feelings, but you should make it clear that you have feelings about what has happened and you are available to talk when he is ready. Reading the questions and answers in Part II of this book and doing the activities in Part III may help.

Q: My child says that he wants to join the army and kill all the terrorists. It's all he talks about. All he wants to do is play with his soldiers and 'kill the bad people.' Is that a bad thing?

Children, particularly boys, often react to a perceived threat with bravado and heightened aggression in their play. This is an appropriate way for them to deal with their anxiety, as long as it is not the only way. Use the activities in this book to help your child express a range of feelings, find ways to help others, and develop a positive attitude.

Q: We have a family vacation planned for Christmas. My child doesn't want to go because it means getting on a plane. Should we cancel the trip?

This is your decision, not your child's decision. Many people are cancelling planned flights. But other people feel that they cannot give in to fear and they must live their lives as normally as possible. When you have made the decision that is best for you and your family, explain your reasons simply and calmly to your child.

Q: I know that I should be talking more to my child, but I'm too upset. I'm afraid that I'm going to break down in front of my child. Which is better: to keep silent or to fall apart?

You have more choices than keeping silent or falling apart. I suggest that you read through Part II of this book by yourself and then see if some of it is appropriate to read with your child. The activities in Part III are not directly about terrorism, and might be a good way to open up communication with your child.

If you continue to feel too upset to talk to your child, then you should consider talking to a counselor about your own anxieties.

Q: My child already has anxiety about a lot of things. He is afraid of dogs and escalators, to name just a few things, and he is very shy with strangers. Is this just going to make things worse?

Children who already have worries and fears are more at risk when there is a traumatic event that affects them or those they love. Children who have excessive fears and anxieties benefit from counseling, and in particular, group counseling with children of the same age. Excessive shyness can become a serious and lifelong problem, but will respond to counseling. I would recommend contacting your school counselor or school psychologist to find out the resources that are available to you and your child.

Part II: Answers to Children's Questions

There are several principles to remember in talking to children about difficult topics:

- Keep your answers simple.
- Accept the fact that children may need to ask the same questions several times and need to have the same answers repeated to them.
- Tell the truth, even if it is upsetting. Children are much more resilient than most of us realize.
- Share your feelings, but do so in a calm and measured manner. Show children that all feelings are okay, but it is what you do with them that counts.
- Invite children to come to you with their questions and concerns at any time.
- Make sure that your voice, tone, and body language express your sincerity as well as your confidence.
- If you don't know an answer to a child's question, or if you don't feel that you can discuss it, then be honest about it. Don't try to fake it. Say, "That is a good question, and I need to think about a good answer. Let me talk to you about this later."

A Letter To Children

My name is Dr. Larry Shapiro. Some children call me Dr. Larry. I am a child psychologist and my job is to help children and parents with their problems. I am writing this book a few days after terrorists stole four planes and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington D.C., and in western Pennsylvania. I hope that this book will help answer your questions about what has happened and what will happen in the future.

I wish I had all the answers for you, but I do not. Your parents and teachers have answers to your personal questions, and you should feel free to ask them.

These are the questions that the children I know are asking. I have written the best answers that I can.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Larry Shapiro

Answers To Children's Questions About Terrorists

Q: What is a terrorist?

Terrorists are people with a great deal of hate in their heart. They have so much hate that they want to harm and scare the people they hate, even though they don't know them.

Some people hate the United States because they think that our country has hurt them or their families. They will do anything they can to hurt us and scare us. They believe that they are at war with our country and that it is okay to hurt and kill people.

We know that this kind of thinking is very wrong. Some people may have reason to be angry or even to hate others, but violence is never a good answer.

Q: Why are terrorists attacking our country?

For many children in America, this is the first time you have heard about terrorists or what they can do. Unfortunately, this is not true in other countries. In Ireland, in some African countries, and particularly in the Middle East countries, terrorists have been trying to hurt people for many years.

You should know that children in these countries are often frightened. They see terrible things on the TV and even in person. But even so they are children just like you and do things just like you. They play, and go to school, and do things with their friends.

I cannot tell you exactly why terrorists attacked our country on September 11, 2001. As of today, we still don't even know who planned the attacks.

Sometimes terrorists tell you the reasons why they are attacking and sometimes they do not. Part of the reason for a terrorist attack is always that they want to scare you. That is what the word "terror" means—that you are very, very afraid, like when you see a scary movie.

Q: Are we in a war?

Yes, the leaders of our country say that we are at war with terrorism and specifically the people who hijacked the airplanes and attacked the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But this is very different than other wars that America has fought. In other wars, we sent the Army, Navy, and Air Force to fight in other countries. But in this war, we are not even sure who is our enemy.

All our military forces are ready for war. Their first job will be to make sure that everyone in the United States and American citizens around the world are safe.

Q: Will they bomb my school or my home?

Terrorists try to make you feel that you are not safe. Fear is their primary weapon. But if we look back at the history of terrorism around the world, terrorists rarely try to attack places where there are children. They are most likely to attack government buildings or military installations.

Q: Will my mommy or daddy have to go into the army?

Today, people volunteer to go in the military. It is their choice. No one has to go if they don't want to go, but many people feel that protecting our country is a very important job. In other wars, there was something called a "draft", and young men had to join the military unless they had health problems. It is not likely that we will have that kind of war again, where thousands of people are needed for the military, but it is possible. Even if this did happen, you would know many, many months before your dad or mom had to go into the military.

Q: I am worried and I have trouble sleeping. What should I do?

The first thing that you need to do is to talk to your parents. They need to know that you are worried. They may want you to see a counselor or someone else to help you talk about your feelings.

Here is a trick that I sometimes teach children who are worried and have problems falling asleep. Maybe it will work for you.

While you are trying to fall asleep, think about your feet. Are you feet all right? Good. Now think about your legs. Are they okay? Good. Now think about your stomach, and then your chest, and your arms and your hands. Do they feel okay, too? Great. Now your shoulders. Now your neck. Now your head. Everything is okay. You just made sure that you are fine. Now you can go to sleep.

Q: Will there be more terrorist attacks?

This is one question that no one can really answer. However, I can tell you that there are thousands of people that are going to work to make this country safer and make sure that you and your family are safe. The President and the Congress have made this their #1 concern. The Army, the Navy, the Coast Guard, the Marines, the police, the firemen and firewomen, people who work in the airports, and many, many more people are going to do everything that they can to prevent anyone else from getting hurt.

Q: Is it safe to fly in an airplane?

Air safety has always been a concern, just like car safety or bicycle safety. When something bad happens and people get hurt, we do many things to make sure that this will never happen again. When I was young, we didn't have seat belts in cars. We didn't wear helmets when we rode our bicycles. Now we know better, and when you ride in a car or ride your bike you are safer than I was at your age. In the future, we will see many things change at airports and on airplanes that will make them even safer than they were before.

Activities for Children Who Are Worried or Scared

This book was written to help you understand your feelings about the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. This was a terrible tragedy, and children and adults all over the world were upset by it. When random violence occurs, everyone is sad, angry, and confused. But there are many other things that happen on a personal scale that can make you as an individual feel worried, sad, afraid, or confused. Understanding your feelings, thoughts, and behaviors is an important part of growing up.

I'm sure that you have already had many problems in your life. Everybody has problems at some time. I know many children who have been teased at school and that is certainly upsetting. I know many children have been sick and had to go to the hospital, and that is very scary. I know many children whose parents have separated or divorced, and that usually makes them feel sad and confused for a long time.

Everyone would like children to be happy and carefree all of the time, but that is just not possible. But if you learn to deal with difficult feelings and difficult circumstances, you will feel happy most of the time, and you will feel good about yourself all of the time.

The activities on the following pages will help you learn ways to talk about feelings. They will also help you learn to understand the feelings of others. They will teach you to have a positive attitude about yourself and your life. They will also give you some ideas about things that you can do every day to help you feel that you can solve your problems, whatever they might be.

Everyone Has Different Feelings Throughout The Day



Different things happen each day that make us feel different ways. Below, I have written six different feelings. Over each feeling, draw a picture of the event, person, or thought that made you feel that way.

1. Happy

2. Sad

3. Afraid

4. Brave

5. Angry

6. Proud

You Feel Better When You Talk About Your Feelings

When you are worried about something, the best thing to do is to talk to someone about it. You can talk to your parents, your teachers, your friends, or a counselor. When you talk about things that bother you, you feel better and sometimes you can learn new ways to think about problems. In the space below, draw a picture about something that you are worried about. It can be anything at all. Now show it to someone with whom you feel comfortable sharing your feelings.



A large empty rectangular box for drawing.

You Should Know What Makes You Happy, So That When You Are Feeling Sad Or Upset, You Can Do Something About It

Many children and adults don't know what to do when they are feeling bad. But you can change your feelings, at least for a while, by doing something that makes you feel better.

List the 10 things that make you feel happy when you are doing them. Make sure that you include things to do with other people, like friends and family.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

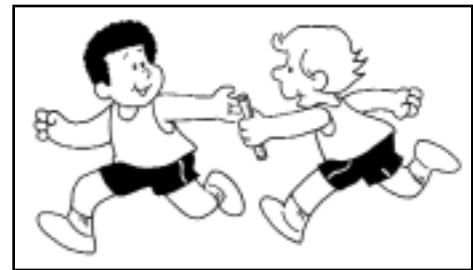
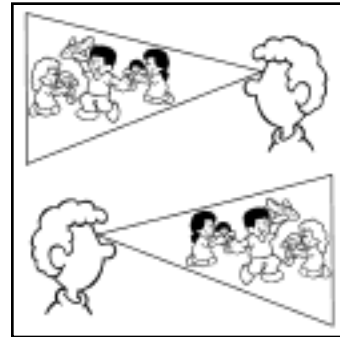
6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

10. _____



You Should Know What Makes You Feel Safe and Secure

Take a minute to think back when you were a baby. Did you have a teddy bear or a doll or a blanket that you slept with and carried around with you to make you feel safe and calm? Maybe you still have it! My oldest daughter had an old blanket. My youngest daughter had a yellow stuffed bear. Feeling safe and secure is important for children, and as you grow up you will learn many things that make you feel this way.



In the space below, make a collage (photographs, drawings, small objects) of all the people and all the things that make you feel safe and secure. Talk about these things with an adult or with your friends.

If you like, you can put it this picture in a frame and keep it in your room. Soon, just looking at it will make you feel safe and secure.

You Should Know How To Calm Yourself Down



1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10...

Everyone is anxious, upset, or afraid sometimes. Did you know that many actors and rock stars get sick with fear before they go on stage? I know of one famous athlete who is afraid of getting a shot at the doctor's office! I know a lawyer who is afraid of spiders! Personally, I don't like shots, and I don't like jellyfish around when I am swimming in the ocean. I don't like being really high on a Ferris Wheel or going really fast on a roller coaster. But I, and all of these other grown ups, have learned one important thing: how to stay calm when you are afraid. And now I'm going to teach this to you.

First take a seat in a comfortable chair.

Now take a very deep breath and let it out s l o w l y.

Now take another deep breath and let it out even s l o w e r.

Now, as you breathe in and out, relax the muscles in your neck. Let your head hang down a little. Count "1."

Now relax the muscles in your shoulders and arms. Keep breathing slowly in and out. Count "2."

Now count "3" and relax your hands and fingers.

Count "4" and relax your chest and stomach.

Count "5" (keep breathing slowly) and relax your upper legs.

Count "6" and relax your lower legs and feet.

Count "7" and relax your toes.

Count "8" and take a very, very deep breath and let it out slowly. As you let it out your whole body is completely relaxed.

Count "9."

Count "10."

Learn To Understand The Feelings Of Others

How do you know when someone else is having trouble with his or her feelings? How do you know when a parent is angry? How do you know when a friend is sad?



Sometimes they just tell you how they feel. That makes it easy. But sometimes they don't tell you how they feel. Sometimes they might not even know how they feel themselves! Did you know that you can tell how people feel just by looking at their face and their "body language?"

In the picture below, write what you think these people are feeling by looking at their expression and "body language".



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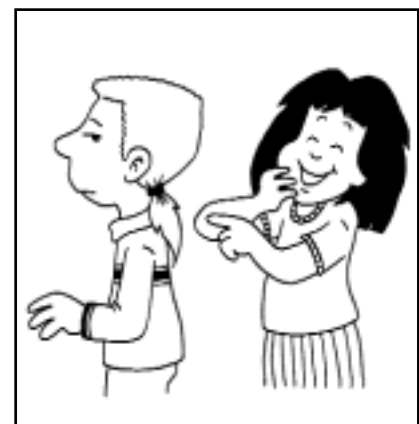
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Feelings Charade

Now, I want to teach you a game called **"Feelings Charades."** Cut out the cards below and shuffle them in a deck. Give them to a parent or friend and ask them to pick the top card and act out that feeling. Then try to guess what feeling they are acting out.

Happy

Proud

Sad

Embarrassed

Guilty

Shy

Afraid

Brave

Surprised

Afraid

Helping Others Takes Your Mind Off Your Own Problems

Some of the happiest people I know are always looking for ways to help others. Helping others makes you proud of yourself. Helping others is a good way to make friends. Helping others brings out the best in you, the people that you help, and anyone who hears about or sees what you have done.

Every day is a good day to help others. Take a shoe box and write these words on the side: HELPING BOX.

Cut out the cards on the next page. On each one write "A Helping Tip" and put it in the box. You can make up your own ideas or use the ones listed below. Every day pick a card from the box and do what is on the card.

These things only take a few minutes of your time, but they will make you feel good about yourself for the whole day.

1. Do an extra chore around the house.
2. Write a letter to your grandparents.
3. Collect canned food for a charity.
4. Pick up trash around your yard or neighborhood.
5. Plant a flower.
6. Call someone that you care about and tell them how you feel.
7. Collect money for the International Red Cross.
8. Read a book to a younger child.
9. Bake cookies for a neighbor.
10. Go through your old toys and books and find something to donate to a charity.
11. Hold the door for someone.
12. Clean up your room (or a closet or a drawer) without being asked.

Helping Tip

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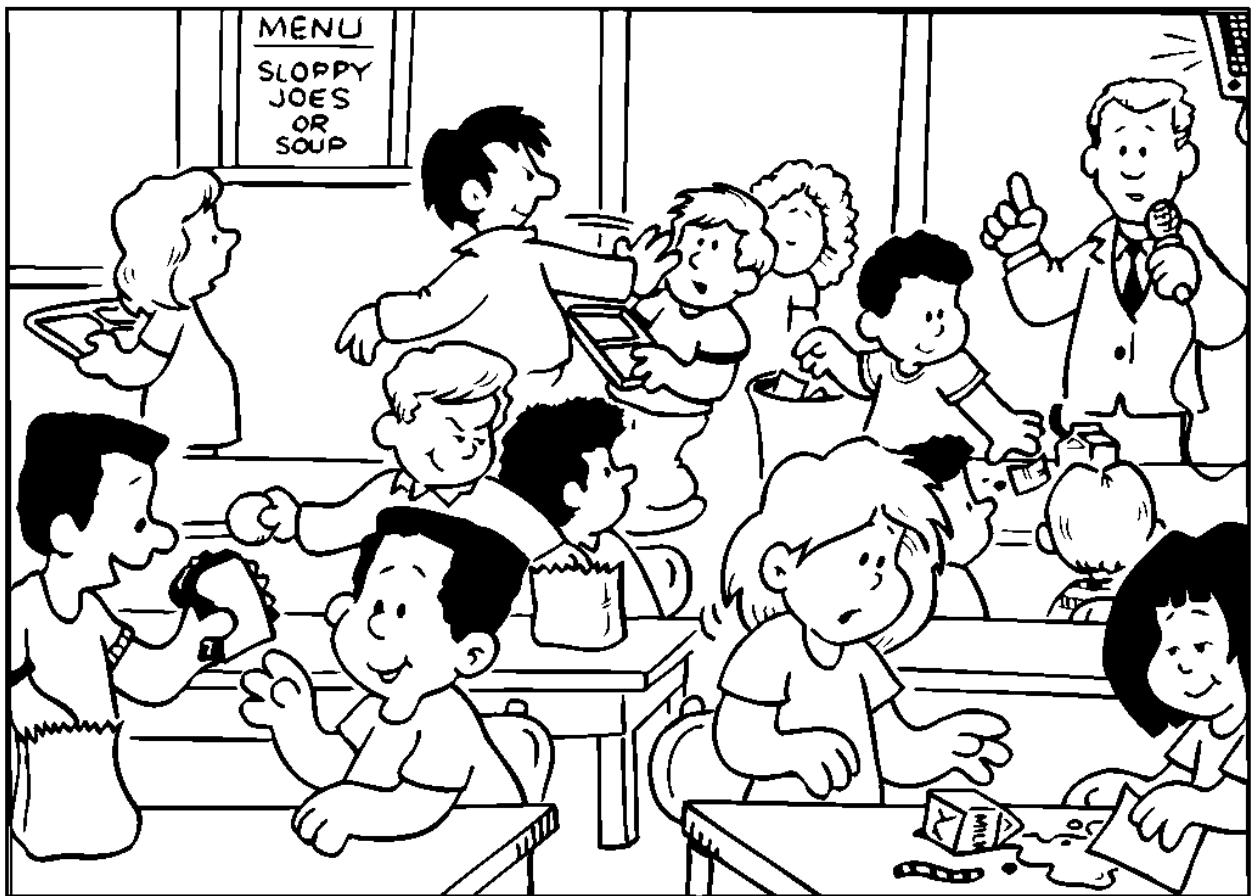
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Helping Others

There are many ways to help others and show that you care about them. On the picture below, color in only the children who are helping others.



Having A Positive Way Of Looking At Yourself And Your Life Will Make You Happier And Healthier

Having a positive attitude is not as easy as it sounds. It takes practice. You need to look at a problem, even a very serious one, and find the ways that it can be solved. Let's take, as an example, Negative Nina and Positive Paula.

Nina saw only the problems in life. She assumed that things would get worse, not better. Even when something good happened, Nina found something bad in it.

But Paula saw that problems also have solutions. And when something good happened she appreciated it and tried to find ways to make it happen again.

Draw a line from each statement to either Negative Nina or Positive Paula.

"I got a D on my report card. Boy, I'm stupid."

"I can't believe I was voted 'best basketball player' in my grade. I guess the practice paid off."

"I just saw my picture in the class photo. My hair looks a mess. I think I'll ask Mom if I can get it cut short."

"I didn't get invited to Sara's party. She's an idiot."

"It's raining again. It rains every Saturday."

"I got a D on my report card. I have to study harder."

"I just saw my picture in the class photo. Boy, do I look like a tall geek."

"It's raining. Let me think about something fun to do inside."

"I didn't get invited to Sara's party. I bet Ryan isn't going either. I'll call him up and see if he's busy."

"I can't believe I was voted 'best basketball player' in my grade. Lucky for me that Shandra had a broken arm this season and couldn't play."



Do You Have A Negative Attitude? Or Do You Have A Positive Attitude That Seeks Solutions To Problems?

Write down five things that you are concerned about or don't like about yourself. Then after each statement, write down something that you can do about it.

Problem:

Solution:

Problem:

Solution:

Problem:

Solution:

Problem:

Solution:

Problem:

Solution:

Change Negative Thinking Into Positive Thinking

If you have any negative thoughts or attitudes, I want you to think about them and try to change them into positive ones.

Write down your negative thoughts in Column 1. See if you can change them into positive, realistic thoughts in Column 2.

Column 1
Negative Thoughts

Column 2
Positive Thoughts

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Know How To Ask For Help

If you are worried or upset about anything at all you should tell your parents or your teacher. Some children, however, find it hard to ask for help.

Here is a form that might make it easier for you to ask for help. Just write in your name and fill in as much of the form as you like. Now give it to someone who you think can help you.

I need to talk to you as soon as possible!

Name:

Today's Date: Time:

I am having trouble concerning:
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I am feeling:
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I think you could help me by:
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Thanks

Going Forward

We have made every effort to get this book to the public as quickly as possible because the effects of trauma don't wait. One of the most basic principles in treating children who have been affected by a traumatic event is to address their anxieties and concerns as quickly as possible. It is worth remembering, however, that children can have a wide range of reactions to a traumatic event. Some children are more vulnerable to anxiety disorders, and they will show immediate symptoms such as nightmares and separation anxiety. Other children may seem to have coped very well with a trauma only to have fears and anxieties surface in later weeks or months.

Terrorism is a new reality for children living in the United States and this reality will be a stress in their lives for years to come. But taking a lesson from children who have lived through terrorism in other countries, it is a reality that our children can successfully learn to live with.

Helping children learn to cope with fear and stress is every adult's responsibility. It requires not just our time, but also an examination in the way that we raise our children. I urge you to take just 15 minutes a day to talk and play with your child with a specific goal in mind: preventing emotional and behavioral problems. Open and honest communication is the most important thing you need. Books with positive stories that teach character-strengthening values will also help. But most important, it is the relationship that you develop with your child that will make a difference. When children spend predictable time with adults, whether they are parents, teachers, grandparents, or family friends, they develop a sense of trust and security in the adult world. They know that they have at least one person who they can always confide in and who will always understand. This is the basis of every therapeutic relationship, but it is certainly not confined to a therapist's office.

For our part, our companies, Play2Grow and Childsworld/Childsplay, will continue to provide parents, teachers, and counselors with tools that can help them guide their children to meet their fullest potential. All children have the right to be happy, to be healthy, and to feel safe and secure. That is what we should all work towards.

-Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D

“Will They Fly A Plane Into Our House?”



It is hard to know what to think, or say, or even feel in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorism attack. But all parents and teachers know that they must put aside their own confusion and pain in order to help children. We hope that this book can help.

The first section of the book gives advice to adults on how they can provide an environment where children can feel safe and loved in spite of their anxiety. A checklist is given for parents to determine if their children are more likely to be affected by the trauma of this event.

The second section of the book provides answers to the most common questions that children are asking about the terrorist attack. These answers are intended to be a starting point for parents and teachers to talk to children and open permanent channels of communication.

The third section contains a dozen paper and pencil activities for children to help them cope with their fears and anxieties. They are designed to help children express their feelings, maintain a positive attitude, and to develop a renewed sense of security.

About the Author: Lawrence E. Shapiro, Ph.D. is a child psychologist and the author of many books for children, parents, and mental health professionals.



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