
DEALING WITH A CRISIS

None of us can predict what is around the corner. Therefore, when there is an unexpected crisis, it can set the whole family into a spin.

Faced with a trauma, the immediate response from parents may be to only deal with what appears to be the most urgent matters. Therefore, it can be easy to overlook the needs of the children. Yet they can be greatly affected by a crisis too.

If children are old enough to have some explanation, then it is important to spend a little time explaining to them that there is a difficulty. The age of the child will determine how much, or how little, they should know.

Children very quickly sense that something is wrong, and they can get really anxious if they are not helped to understand what is happening. Reassure them that you are dealing with the situation. Sometimes it is better for the child to go to friends until the worst of the difficulty has passed. If they do, keep in frequent contact with them, and bring them home as soon as possible.

Because children learn by example, how parents cope in a crisis will influence how they will manage when faced with a major problem. When you take steps to deal with an issue, and get support from others, you will be helping your child to learn what to do themselves.

Q:

My mother has always lived with us, but her health has become so bad that we are going to have to move her into a nursing home. We are just waiting for a place. The whole family adores her, and this is going to affect everyone, especially me. The children know nothing else except living with their Granny. Now there is just going to be me and the children. They are 8, 7 and 3. What should I do?

A:

This will be a major change in all your lives. Although moving your mother to a nursing home is imminent, you need to take time to talk all of this through with the two older children. They need to hear that Granny will be better looked after in the nursing home, and that you will all visit her often. Then you need to talk about what your new routine will be like without Granny. Make this as interesting as possible, so that they recognise a sense of optimism in you.

As everyone will miss Granny, give the children lots of opportunities to express their feelings. While the older ones will have more understanding, the three year old needs to be helped to know what is going on too, and to say how they feel. Finally, don't forget to seek an outlet for your own feelings at this time of transition.

