

PARENTING THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES

This tip sheet is here to lend a hand (and a sprinkle of courage!) for those tough talks about life's big bumps – like illness, divorce, and the news that's hard to explain. With gentle, kid-friendly tips and plenty of warmth, we'll help you navigate these chats with the heart of a hero and the hug of a friend!

Guiding Conversations with Your Child

- **Reflect on Your Own Experience:** Think about how you were supported as a child and how that impacts how you support your own child today.
- **Be Honest and Open:** Children sense when something is off. Use simple, truthful language and repeat information if necessary. It's better to be honest up front – that builds trust.
- **Model Calmness:** Children pick up on your energy, so try to process your emotions before talking with them. Also, it is okay to share how you are feeling in an age-appropriate way.



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Age - Specific Tips

1. **Infants:** Maintain routines to provide comfort and consistency. Be mindful of your emotions – infants pick up on stress and if possible, maintaining a consistent caregiver is important.
2. **Toddler & Preschoolers:** Keep explanations simple: they may misinterpret events as their fault. Reassure them frequently, especially during changes or separations.
3. **School Aged Children:** address their desire for details; be honest but age-appropriate. Physical symptoms (like stomach aches) can signal stress.
4. **Tween & Teens:** Expect them to seek peer support but keep communication open. Acknowledge their growing independence yet offer guidance and listening.



Talking About Difficult Topics

- **Death:** Use clear terms like “died” rather than euphemisms. Answer questions honestly and at their pace. If your child hears that euphemism help them understand what it means.
- **Illness:** Explain what's happening in simple language and reassure them they are not at fault.
- **Divorce:** Assure children they are loved and didn't cause the separation. Avoid negative comments about the other parent. Own your part of the separations or else your child will.
- **Scary News:** Limit their exposure to news and discuss events calmly. Emphasize safety and provide a clear family plan for emergencies. Let them know it's your job to worry, plan and take care of them.

Helpful Resources

Parent Coaching: Parent Connex^t® offers support for managing these conversations. Contact us for a virtual session. **Visit Us** at www.beechacres.org for additional support and resources.