

Routines & Support Help Children With Their Fears

Children of all ages have fears. Naturally their fears are different at different ages. Often they come when children are learning new things quickly and getting more independent. Changes can throw the child off balance and create fearfulness. They need your support and reassurance that some parts of life are stable and secure. This is why routines help children deal with their fears.

Most children will grow out of these fears. If a parent has unresolved fears, it may be difficult to give a child the support he/she needs and avoid overreacting. Here is a list of common age-related fears.

Infants and toddlers

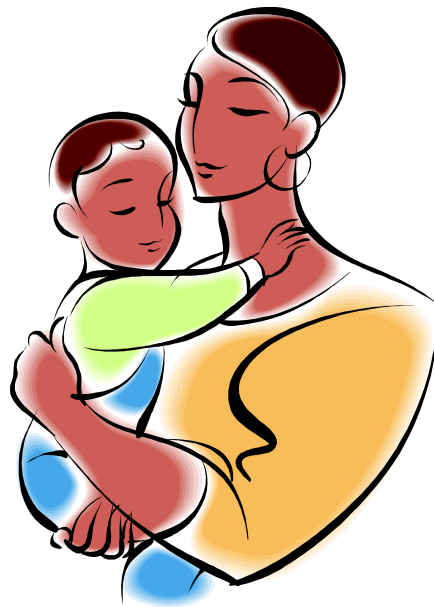
- loud noises
- separation
- strangers

Preschoolers

- animals – especially dogs
- the dark
- ghosts and monsters

School age

- snakes and spiders
- fear of failure
- rejection
- the news
- TV shows
- blood, injury, and sickness
- being home alone
- death



There Are Many Things You Can Do To Help Children With Their Fears

1. Accept and respect children's fears. Fears are real to children. Don't laugh or say that their fears are not real.

2. Spend extra time with children when they are afraid. Bedtime is a time when some children need special attention because other fears feel larger when they are combined with fears of the dark. Bedtime routines with a story and cuddling can be comforting.

3. Establish a predictable routine. Knowing patterns in daily life makes children feel secure in their world. In order to be brave, it helps them to know what to expect. Routines help children feel like you have things under control and are protecting them.



4. Talk about feeling scared. It is important for children to learn to talk about all of their feelings, including fear. Reading books about fears can help with this. Just ask a librarian to help find books that are just right for your child.

5. Use play to talk about fears. Dolls, stories, and art can help children talk about being afraid.

6. Help the children learn about what scares them. Knowing how things work and what to expect can make things less scary

7. Talk about your fears, too. Children need to know that adults have different kinds of feelings, too

8. Recognize courage. Tell children when you notice them trying something that scares them.

9. Talk about what might help them cope with their fear. Ask the children what would help them feel less afraid. If children are scared of the dark, turn on a little nite-lite so that it will not be so dark.