

HOW TO TALK WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DIFFICULT THINGS

Use this list to help you open the conversation

Anything that is Mentionable is Manageable- Fred Rogers



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SET UP THE ENVIRONMENT

- Make some quiet, uninterrupted time where you can be available to the child fully
- Find out what the child knows already or what they have heard
- Limit chances of disruptions and keep routines consistent
- Understand that questions may come at any time out of nowhere but they can also be answered in the moment or “during special time”
- It is OK to have to “get some more information” if you do not know how to answer the question
- Inform teachers and others that work closely with the child that you have opened the conversation.
- It is ok to show emotions of sadness as long as they are not too overwhelming that they may frighten the child.

WORDS AROUND ADDICTION

- Drugs are substances or chemical things that people take to feel differently. They are not given by a doctor and can be harmful to you
- Medicine is given to you by a doctor and can help you feel better. We take medicine as the doctor tells us and we do not take too much and we do not share it with others.
- Addiction- It is like getting sticky gum out of your hair, it is difficult and it takes a lot of time and hard work- people need to help you.
- Rehab/ Halfway House- A place where someone who has an addiction goes to get special help
- Overdose- When someone has taken too much of a drug and their body has stopped working or is not working correctly.
- Incarceration – When an adult breaks a grown up rule and has to go to away* for some time (Jail, prison preferred)

WORDS AROUND DEATH

- Be sure children know this is not their fault
- Avoid the use of metaphors or things such as “sleeping with the angels”, “gone” etc... Use concrete words like “Dead” or “Not Living”
- Death means that your body is not working anymore, you do not breathe, eat or talk anymore. Use words like “Dead or not living”
- Body stopped working due to: (heart attack, overdose, old age, accident)
- You cannot come back to life after you are dead
- Most people live a very long time and we can keep ourselves healthy and safe but sometimes death happens.
- Invite the child to the ceremonies surrounding death (funerals, celebrations of life). Explain to them what they will see there and what people do.
- Encourage and continue to share positive memories throughout the child’s life.