

## 5 Things To Do To Support Kids During Turbulent Times

You cannot keep the birds of misfortune from flying overhead but you can keep them from nesting in your hair- Chinese Proverb

During times of crisis, change or loss anyone who has children they care about wants to do things to help, protect and encourage their kids. What is happening in our lives as adults impacts the children we are close to too but there are things we can do to make that impact as positive as possible or to provide an opportunity to teach skills that will make a lifetime of difference. One thing is for sure- kids know when something is going on and protecting them from it totally is rarely an option. These are some ideas to keep the birds of misfortune from nesting in your hair...or your home.

**Honesty is still the best policy** (but you set the guidelines). When children ask, you need to answer. Answer in the language they understand and answer the question they asked not everything you think they should know or just what you want to tell them. Sometimes kids ask questions indirectly so keep your ears open for statements or stories that are really questions.

**Rock so you can roll.** In hard times finding comfort is vital to keep plowing through the tough stuff. As humans, we are relational creatures who generally need contact with others. Hold and rock your kids as long as you can or start again if you have stopped- rocking is a physically comforting activity that can have neurological and emotional benefits for both you and your child. For older children, sit with them on the couch. For teens, if all else fails, text them! There is healing power in touch, so if they balk at rocking, just up the physical contact.

**Steady goes it.** Keep the rules steady and the boundaries predictable. When things feel crazy and out of control kids need to know the limits. They need you to be firm and pull them back from the edges of bad behavior, of drama meltdowns and too many late nights. As adults there is safety in knowing a stop sign means stop and a green light means go. Children need these clear signs too.

**Revel in their resilience.** Celebrate their strengths. Focus on the things your children do to cope that help and point them out. Let your kids know what you enjoy about them and learn from them. Play to their strong points encouraging them to use what comes naturally to manage change or loss. Are they cuddlers? Cuddle. Do they like to kick a ball...kick. And remember kids really are resilient and can manage difficult things with your help paving the way.

**Prepare don't scare.** If you anticipate upcoming losses or change open up the conversation and make a plan together to cope with those changes. Children often hear bits of conversation and piece together a story that is not true or worse than reality. Talking helps. Over-inform all the other adults who take care of your kids about what is coming and how to handle it. And you don't have to have all the answers, sometimes it's enough to just show interest and listen.



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**Heartlinks Grief Center**  
**At Family Hospice**  
**For Kids, Teens, Families and Adults**

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**Support Groups & Programs**

*To register or learn more about any of the following programs, please contact Heartlinks at (618) 277-1800.*

**Monthly Group** – No-cost/Donation only, monthly grief support for kids, teens and adults. Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on the first Monday of every month at the Heartlinks Grief Center. All groups occur concurrently. Periodic social opportunities are available as well. Registration and initial visit required.

**Little Bears** (preschool/early elementary)

**Shooting Stars** (elementary)

**Parenting Alone** (young widows/widowers)

**Rhapsody Group** (preteen)

**Brat Pack Group** (teen)

**Aching Arms** (when a child dies)

**TAG** – Teens And Grief support is available at local schools. Participation can be arranged through a student’s high-school counselor, teacher or social worker, or by calling Heartlinks. TAG meets during class times with trained counselors from the Heartlinks Grief Center.

**Facing the Future** – Adult grief support programs are offered for any adult who has experienced the death of a loved one, be it child, sibling, spouse, friend or any other loss. Facilitated by counselors from the Heartlinks Grief Center.

**Grief and Trauma Counseling Program** – Individual assessment and focused counseling services available for individuals of all ages trying to manage the loss of a loved one due to death.

**Anticipatory Loss Counseling** – Individual and family counseling services for people of all ages managing the multiple changes, losses and fears associated with serious illness.

**Addiction Loss Program** – Grief group for adults dealing with the loss of a loved one to addiction- related causes. These support groups are held in St. Claire. Held in the Heartlinks office on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month from 6:30 to 8:00 at 5110 Main St. Belleville, IL 62226.

**Mobile Services Available**

Please Call Heartlinks at (618) 277-1800 to Arrange Services for your Group

**Outreach** – Mobile program designed to be used for large groups of children ages 5-12. Works well in summer camps or other big projects. This program works to teach children coping strategies to deal with life change as well as loss due to death.

**Crisis Intervention** – Mobile program to help groups or communities deal with a sudden crisis. All ages served.

**Bursting Bubbles** – Mobile program available to schools. This can be offered as an afterschool or weekend workshop for elementary school children who have experienced the death or loss of a loved one.

**Good Grief** – Mobile programming available for school, church or community groups creating an opportunity for intergenerational interaction, art activities, and games to promote fun and learning on topics like managing loss in families, supporting grieving children/youth and coping with difficult times.

**Speakers’ Bureau** – Mobile opportunity to teach about grief and Heartlinks to local businesses and community organizations.