



Sexual Assault Response Services *of Southern Maine*

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Ways to Help Children with Their Feelings

1. Children show their distress and anxiety by being extra sensitive, by withdrawing or by acting out. Give the child extra support, encouragement and patience when s/he is under stress.
2. Be sensitive to the feelings that a child is communicating non-verbally as well as verbally.
3. Help children learn to talk about their feelings rather than acting them out. Show them how to solve problems verbally rather than physically through modeling better ways to handle situations.
4. Model talking about feelings by expressing your own feelings and commenting on the child's emotions. (I feel sad sometimes when I argue with my friends. Maybe you do sometimes, too.)
5. Young children need help learning to label their feelings. This helps them tap into emotions and identify them more accurately, which will make them better able to deal with them. (To a young child: I think maybe you're crying because you're very tired; or I know you're crying because Joan took your ball and that made you unhappy.)
6. Help children to learn what they can do to calm themselves down when they are upset. For example, sometimes a little time alone is helpful to an older child.
7. Reassure a child that all children have feelings in certain situations. (For example try using, "Sometimes kids get scared, and that's okay," or, "A lot of people get frustrated and mad when something doesn't work.")
8. Children are sometimes better able to respond to a comment that to a direct question about what's wrong. (Gee, you seem a little upset; maybe you're thinking about your mommy.)
9. It's sometimes helpful to comment to a child about their feelings in the context of, "A lot of children have those feelings." (Most kids feel sad or scared when their mommy and daddy fight.)

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Help, Hope, and Healing