



CRISIS

PARENT CONVERSATION GUIDE

... for great conversations with kids

Your toddler/preschooler can have a meltdown over a toy or snack. But what happens when there is a bigger crisis or tragedy in their world, like the death of a loved one or a big move or a divorce? What do you do? What do you say? A preschooler may not be able to verbally express how they are coping, but there are ways to pay attention to your child's non-verbal cues.

No one knows your preschooler better than you. You will be able to notice if they are in crisis mode before anyone else. Pay attention to changes in behavior (like thumb-sucking, bed-wetting, and clinginess) and provide a consistent, safe, and loving environment for them to heal and grow.

Help them feel secure. When your preschooler is experiencing a crisis, there are some things you can say and do that will help them feel safe. Here are a few ideas:

- "I'm here, you're not alone." (*Listen to their feelings and validate them.*)
- "Why don't we draw/color together." (*Observe how they express themselves symbolically.*)
- "I love watching you play." (*Pay attention to what they mirror, watch how they play and notice changes or regression in their behavior.*)
- "I am always looking out for you."
- "I'll help you when you need it."
- "I'll play with you. I love having time with you." (*Move to their play area or space. Play is their first language.*)
- "He/she died. That means their bodies stopped working." (*Explain in simple clear words. Don't use confusing phrases like, "We lost grandma."*)
- "You are a beautiful, wonderful, child of God."
- "You can know that God is always with you."
- "Even when you feel sad, God loves you."

Make sure to involve professionals, counselors (as needed), as well as your ministry leader.