

Helping Children Make Sense of an Overwhelming World

Written by Ashlea Cook



In a world where media constantly focuses on childhood heroes tragically passing away, planes falling out of the sky, and magical places with kangaroos and koalas going up in flames, it can feel like a very scary time, not only for a child but for everyone.

Our lives are constantly flooded with news stories and updates of all shapes and sizes on a 24/7 basis. Thanks to our highly connected society, our ability to control what we see, read, and hear is no longer what it once was.

While we cannot control what is shared in news stories and media, we can work diligently with kids to make room for real conversations, where emotions are discussed and questions are asked.

As adults, we may not always be able to make sense of the world ourselves, but we can try to make sense of it hand in hand with the children around us; making plans, building confidence and finding ways to help them feel safe and reduce feelings of uncertainty and fear.

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Message from Our CEO

I want to thank you for helping us to serve over 1,500 Calgarians in need this past holiday season!

But our work doesn't stop after the holidays. We are committed to a holistic approach to working with families that looks deeper into their challenges, and how they can best be supported on a path towards healing and success.

In this New Year, as we prepare for our 25th anniversary, we are focusing on improving mental health not only by raising awareness and accessibility, but also by recognizing and supporting the complex needs of children in challenging situations, such as foster care or group care.

And, we are continuing our work with Indigenous communities, with committed Elders and Knowledge Keepers who provide healing programs for parents and children impacted by intergenerational trauma.

Take, for example, the 15 dads who trekked out to Pekewe House, our cultural space for Indigenous ceremonies and programs, in 40 below temperatures this January. Those dads have found a place that ensures personal and cultural safety, and a space to develop meaningful connections with our staff and each other, building a foundation for their healing journey.

This year, to celebrate our 25th anniversary, I want to invite you to join us in supporting families like these with a gift of \$25. Or, join our Monthly Giving Circle! Your gift of \$25 per month will help connect families with vital early intervention and prevention services, like drumming circles, parenting courses and youth programs.

Every dollar counts. Will you help?

– Karen Olivier, CEO



Flip to page 4 to make a donation today, or visit www.closetohome.com/newsletter.

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Start a Conversation

Michelle Jerome, a Health and Wellness Worker and Family Specialist at Closer to Home, suggests that the best approach to discussing negative world events with a child is to start a conversation that gives the child a chance to express and explain the fears they may have.

It should be noted that not all children are able to find the words to express their concerns, so allowing a child to draw out their fears via art may be an effective way for them to begin to share.

When such fears are shared by the child, the parent or caregivers should always respond with an empathetic statement that acknowledges the fear and how real it is for the child.

What you could say:

"I can see this is really bothering you. It can be scary to see and read about some of the things that are going on in the world around us. Let's talk about these fears and make a plan so you would know what to do if you ever felt unsafe."

Make a Safety Plan

Michelle emphasized that it is important to provide rationales and context along with safety plans so the child understands that such situations are rare and not something they need to worry about on a daily basis. She explained that acknowledging the validity of the fear, discussing or diffusing anxious thoughts, and

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making a safety plan helps the child know what to do if something ever happens. This can provide a great deal of comfort and security to ease any runaway thoughts that children may have.

Parents and caregivers can write out or draw a safety plan that outlines who to call and how to stay safe if something were to go wrong. Talking through different scenarios with your child and making safety plans surrounding those scenarios can remove uncertainty and increase safety.



Show Kids that it is Okay to Express Emotions

No parent or caregiver is given a “how-to” book on approaching these difficult situations, so it is also important that as the adult, you understand that it is okay to show emotions. It provides an opportunity for the adult to model and discuss how we deal with fear, sadness and anxiety when they arise.

What you could say:

"Mommy/daddy sometimes gets a little scared when these things happen. I know I am feeling this way because my face feels hot or my heart beats a little faster, and that's my body's way of telling me it's time to take a cool down, go for a walk, have some tea, or call a friend or someone I trust."

This type of statement helps the child understand the emotion, along with the bodily sensation that may accompany that emotion while modelling the use of appropriate coping skills.

We may not be able to protect children from negative news or scary images, but we can strive to create a world where they feel confident with their coping skills and plans to stay safe. Children who feel safe also feel free to explore, to be curious, and to simply enjoy being a kid, which is really what it's all about!

Join Our Team

Group Home Worker

This permanent full-time position, in Calgary or Airdrie, works closely with a team of professionals to support children and youth in a community group home. The Group Home Worker's primary responsibility is to facilitate success for children and youth by assisting with day to day activities and routines, implementing skill development strategies, managing crisis, assisting with school difficulties and providing relief coverage. Utilizing the Teaching-Family Model, Group Home Workers encourage the development of close relationships and relevant skills which enable children and youth to successfully integrate back into their families and communities.

Awake Overnight Staff

This part-time or full-time position, in Calgary or Airdrie, works closely with a team of professionals to support our Community Teaching Homes. The Awake Overnight Staff's primary responsibility is to provide awake and proactive overnight supervision in our programs for clientele ranging in age from 6 years to adulthood and to ensure the safety and security of all clients. This includes, but is not limited to, implementing and documenting hourly room checks, investigating any unusual night time activity in the house and contacting on-call or supervisory staff as needed to assist with any emergencies. You will also be required to complete administrative tasks and household tasks (such as cleaning and food prep) as needed.

For detailed information or to check out more career and volunteer opportunities, please visit our website at www.closetohome.com.

Thank You!



IT ALWAYS SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE UNTIL IT'S
DONE

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