

Communicating with children

Communicating about worrisome, sad, or difficult topics can be challenging. Avoiding tough subjects does not help children or teens learn to manage worries and to accept that sad and bad things do happen. Age-appropriate discussions about the PSP job and risks can help children and teens worry less. If your child has concerns, understanding their point of view allows you to problem solve together and provide support. Below are tips for communicating with children and teens, particularly when dealing with difficult subjects.

- Ask your child what they know about the topic, which can help you find where to begin. You can ask an open-ended question, such as “What do you know about...?”
- Listen. Allow for pauses and silence. Give your child time to think, respond, and elaborate.
- Avoid asking leading questions (where the question suggests an answer).
- Find out how your child feels and validate their feelings (e.g., show that you are listening and understand, use validating statements such as “I can see why you’re feeling ___”).
- Tell your child how you feel. This is a good way to model the skills of identifying emotions and communicating feelings.
- Be honest (in an age-appropriate way). Avoid giving details that are too graphic or scary.
- Say “I don’t know” – it’s okay to not have all of the answers.
- It’s okay if they become tearful or cry when discussing difficult topics (learning to accept and talk about sad or anxious feelings are important skills).
- Comfort your child if they become upset. Let them know that they are cared for and loved.
- Have discussions at a pace that works for your child. Discussing a difficult topic may take place over several conversations.
- Let your child know that you will do everything you can to keep yourself safe, them safe, etc.

A Note on Anxiety



It is normal for children and teens to worry or have some anxiety. Anxiety becomes a problem if it is intense, happens often, and makes it hard to do everyday activities. If you think that anxiety may be a problem for your child or teen, consult with your primary care provider or a qualified mental health professional.

For more information about anxiety in children and teens, visit:

www.anxietycanada.com or <https://kidshelpphone.ca/>