



E.A.R.S. FOR FEARS

E = earnestly listen

Researchers agree that an earnest and undivided listening ear is the first way to help a child deal with fear. This involves listening and asking open-ended questions that encourage the child to talk further. Parents should avoid drawing conclusions quickly, giving immediate advice or preaching to a child. The fear a child expresses may seem vague, but it nevertheless has been real enough to cause the child distress.

A = accept the child's story

Be willing to see the situation through the child's eyes. If a young girl feels her clothes make her stand out as "different" from her peers and she senses that they snicker at her for this, don't brush off her fear by saying "Just don't pay any attention to them", "What does it matter". An adult may minimize the trivial criticism of an un-enlightened peer group. For the young child, however, such acceptance is the lifeblood of social survival. A parent can learn to see things the way a child sees them. Intellectualizing is not appropriate at this point.

R = reassure

Parents should reassure children. They do that by trying to help the child understand what is going on in their (the children's) world. Children need to know that parents will try to see the future as best as they can. As children learn that parents are taking seriously what is going on and as they see that parents are not angry or confused, but rather are demonstrating confidence, this will become an anchor point for the child. "Being there" for the child, "in season and out", is an important role the parent must play; the counselor can assist in playing this as well.

S = suggest

Suggesting good solutions options and supporting the child as he or she tries (and fails) at some options is an important fourth part of how "E.A.R.S" can help overcome a child's fears. Support and consistent encouragement by key adults builds a child's sense of worth.

"The basic requirement of everybody, young and old, is to feel that he or she is worth something."

Ref: Counselling & Children
Walter Byrd, M.D.
Paul Warren, M.D.

Resources for Christian Counselling

