

How to Support Your Child or Teen: For Parents/Caregivers

1 Listen to Your Child
It is important for your child to have a safe space to talk and share their feelings. Act as a sounding board and validate your child's feelings. This can help them to create their unique story. This story can even be used as a way for your child to support a friend in the future.

2 Allow Emotional Expression
Allow your child to have a safe space to express their emotions. Your child may experience a wide range of emotions: anger, sadness, pain, shame, guilt, or other powerful emotions. Often, children are not able to verbalize what they are feeling. Avoid minimizing these emotions, telling them how they should feel, or trying to put a positive spin on things.

3 Encourage Coping Skills
You can support your child by helping them find healthy ways to cope with the overwhelming emotion. Try out different activities as a family: deep breathing, yoga, taking breaks, going for walks, gratitude jars, artistic expression, etc. Help your child identify the different activities that work well for them and develop a plan for when these feelings arise.

4 Practice Self-Care
Just like the oxygen mask theory, you must take care of yourself first before you can support your child. Implement healthy coping skills, develop a self-care plan, surround yourself with a support system and express your emotions--this way you can serve as a role model for your child.

5 Understand Grief Comes in Waves
Both you and your child will have easier and harder days, and it is important to give yourself and your child grace to grieve. Be open about it if you are having a difficult day and encourage them to do the same, as this can help prevent misunderstanding.

6 Establish/Maintain Routines
Children need routine and normalcy to feel in control, supported and comforted. Keep limits consistent and clear to provide a safe and secure environment for everyone.

Ask for Help
7 It can be difficult to ask for help. Stay connected with your support system and encourage your child to identify friends and adults that they can go to when they need support. Look for resources in your area that can help your child to build their social support with others who understand what they're going through.

8 Make New Memories
Remind your child that it's okay to be happy and make new memories. Plan family dates: go for walks, visit new places, go to the movies, make new traditions, etc.

