

Helping Children Cope in Unsettling Economic Times: To Deal with Children's & Adolescent's Concerns

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Many adults today are concerned about the “world economic crisis”. Worries about mortgages, investments, retirement funds, post-secondary tuition, job losses and even daily expenses are in the air and some children and adolescents are noticing this increased stress. Young children may interpret the situation as far worse than it is for their situation, and adolescents can also be worried as they hear and see more about the crisis in the media.

Although not all children and adolescents are concerned about these issues, those who are more vulnerable or sensitive need assistance in understanding what is happening and how these events do or do not impact on their lives. Parents and teachers need to know how to cope with these reactions.

- Be a good listener and observer – do not bring the crisis to the attention if children and adolescents if they do not appear to have questions or it is not causing them stress
- Be aware of potential child/adolescent stress reactions:
 - ◊ Younger children- irritability, aggressiveness, clinginess, nightmares, school avoidance, poor concentration, withdrawal
 - ◊ Older children and adolescents – sleep and eating changes, agitation, increase in conflicts, physical complaints, uncharacteristic behaviour, poor concentration
- Be aware of potential child/adolescent stress reactions
- When necessary, discuss events in age-appropriate terms and stick to the facts



- Be reassuring
- Emphasize people's natural resilience – focus on children's and adolescent's competencies, especially what helps them cope when they are upset

For further information, please consult your school psychology staff.

Prepared by Dr. Debra Lean, Chief Psychologist

Sources:

American Psychological Association, Dollars and Sense: Talking to Your Children about the Economy www.apa.org

National Association of School Psychologists, Helping Children Cope in Unsettling Times: The Economic Crisis Tips for Parents and Teachers www.nasponline.org □