

# PARENTS , KIDS AND THE PANDEMIC CRISIS

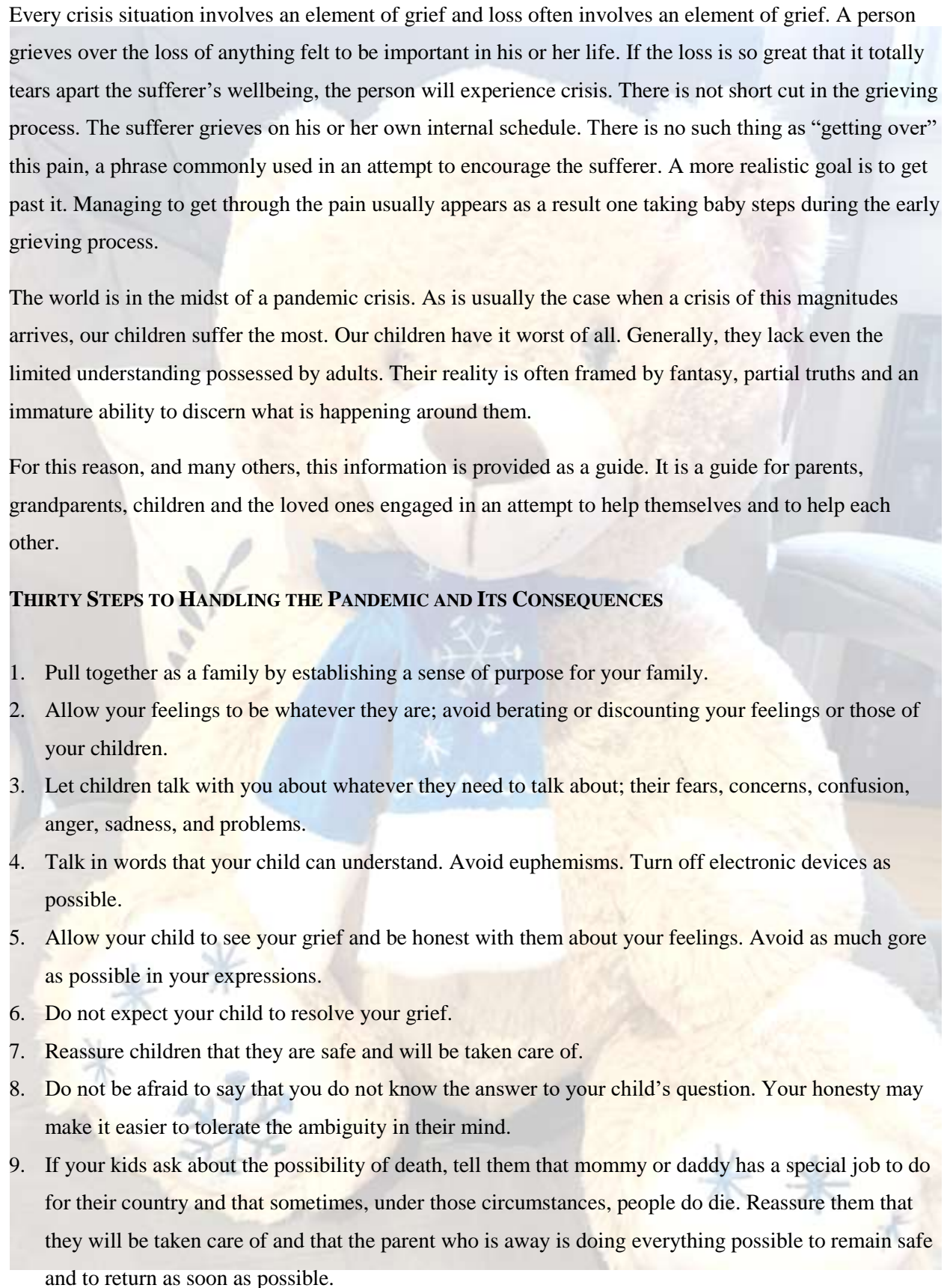
INFORMATION DESIGNED TO ASSIST SPOUSES, PARENTS AND  
CHILDREN IN HANDLING THE PANDEMIC STRESS AND THE  
CONSEQUENCES

*To be used by parents, grandparents,  
children, spouses, hotline workers,  
counselors, and peer team members, in an  
attempt to minimize the psychological  
trauma resulting from the crisis caused by  
the pandemic*



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Every crisis situation involves an element of grief and loss often involves an element of grief. A person grieves over the loss of anything felt to be important in his or her life. If the loss is so great that it totally tears apart the sufferer's wellbeing, the person will experience crisis. There is not short cut in the grieving process. The sufferer grieves on his or her own internal schedule. There is no such thing as "getting over" this pain, a phrase commonly used in an attempt to encourage the sufferer. A more realistic goal is to get past it. Managing to get through the pain usually appears as a result one taking baby steps during the early grieving process.

The world is in the midst of a pandemic crisis. As is usually the case when a crisis of this magnitudes arrives, our children suffer the most. Our children have it worst of all. Generally, they lack even the limited understanding possessed by adults. Their reality is often framed by fantasy, partial truths and an immature ability to discern what is happening around them.

For this reason, and many others, this information is provided as a guide. It is a guide for parents, grandparents, children and the loved ones engaged in an attempt to help themselves and to help each other.

### **THIRTY STEPS TO HANDLING THE PANDEMIC AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**

1. Pull together as a family by establishing a sense of purpose for your family.
2. Allow your feelings to be whatever they are; avoid berating or discounting your feelings or those of your children.
3. Let children talk with you about whatever they need to talk about; their fears, concerns, confusion, anger, sadness, and problems.
4. Talk in words that your child can understand. Avoid euphemisms. Turn off electronic devices as possible.
5. Allow your child to see your grief and be honest with them about your feelings. Avoid as much gore as possible in your expressions.
6. Do not expect your child to resolve your grief.
7. Reassure children that they are safe and will be taken care of.
8. Do not be afraid to say that you do not know the answer to your child's question. Your honesty may make it easier to tolerate the ambiguity in their mind.
9. If your kids ask about the possibility of death, tell them that mommy or daddy has a special job to do for their country and that sometimes, under those circumstances, people do die. Reassure them that they will be taken care of and that the parent who is away is doing everything possible to remain safe and to return as soon as possible.

10. If a death occurs, share with the child in terms that they can understand and avoid the tendency to be euphemistic. Straight talk usually works best.
11. Remember that children often take their lead about their own behavior from their parents. They will watch and learn how you handle the unexpected changes to their life, the reality of the pandemic, and injuries or death resulting from it.
12. Children will look to you for structure, guidance, limits and support. Give it to them.
13. Ask your child what he or she needs from you for you to be helpful to them. Maybe they need a hug, time to talk, play time with you, or straight talk. Different age children will need different things at different times. Adapt to the age and maturity level of your kid.
14. Identify areas of concern in your life over which you have control. Exercise that control.
15. Have realistic expectations of yourself and your children in order to minimize stress.
16. Be realistic about your child's role in the family while a husband or wife is absent. Remember that a five-year-old cannot be the "man of the house" or a "mature young lady." Avoid assigning impossible tasks for children to fulfill.
17. Write letters to the loved ones who are away and encourage children to do the same. Letters should be newsy, informative and tell about home, family happenings and life cycle events. Parents and older children can write letters. The younger child can draw pictures.
18. Avoid depressive letters as much as possible. Focus on the positive. This will help you focus your life and cheer the reader.
19. Continue projects that you have already begun.
20. Create a routine for yourself and stick with it.
21. Maintain your personal health and hygiene.
22. Stay in touch with your friends. This mutual support is helpful.
23. Set boundaries with your children. Hear their feelings and understand the behavior that might result from feelings. Establish limits to provide stability, structure and continuity. Do not over do it either way.
24. Observe changes in your child's behavior, attitudes and expressions. Pay attention both to verbal and to non-verbal behavior. Be prepared to respond as appropriate.
25. Use support groups as necessary for your self and for your kids. Participate separately, or together with your children, as appropriate.
26. Get professional help for yourself and/or your children as needed. Sometimes, counseling, in conjunction with support groups, offers maximum benefit.
27. Everyday, find something to laugh about. Use laughter as a stress manager and reducer.
28. Walk or exercise regularly and include sufficient rest and relaxation in your schedule.

29. Both for yourself and for your children, maintain the continuity of the familiar. This includes schedules, school attendance, friendships, TV programs, activities and the like.
30. Listen, hear and respond. Do not lecture.

**SPECIFIC GUIDELINES: WHAT PARENTS CAN DO  
TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN COPE WITH FEELINGS.**

Talk with your child, providing simple, accurate information to questions.

*Talk with your child about your own feelings.*

Listen to what your child says and how your child says it. Is there fear, anxiety, insecurity? Your repeating the child's words may be very helpful, such as, "You are afraid that..." or, "You wonder if..." This helps both you and the child to clarify feelings.

*Reassure your child, "We are together. I care about you. I will take care of you."*

You might need to repeat information and reassurances many times. Do not stop responding just because you told the child once.

*Hold your child. Provide comfort. Touching is important for children during these times.*

Spend extra time putting your child to bed. Talk and offer assurance. Leave the night light on if necessary.

*Observe your child at play. Listen to what is said and watch how your child plays. Frequently, children express feelings of fear or of anger while playing with dolls, trucks and friends.*

Provide play experiences to relieve tension. Work with play dough, paint, play in water, and the like.

*Allow your child to rely on his/her security blanket or toy, as needed.*

If you need professional assistance, seek it early to maximize the benefit.

For Additional Information: Call or Write

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