

Faith at Home



Ideas for parents of young children

Facing Our Fears

Outdoors

Plant some flower bulbs that will bloom in the spring. Bring your children to the store, and buy some bulbs (tulips, narcissus, snowdrops, anemones, whatever you like).

Together, dig some holes in your yard's soil, drop those bundles of promise into their places, cover them with soil, and look ahead to their blooms after winter.

Creativity

Spend some time with free-art supplies such as colored pencils, crayons, chalk, charcoals, colored papers torn up for mosaic pictures, moldable clay, paints, watercolors, or craft items, so your children and you can express whatever you like in a visual and/or tactile way.

Play

Create or adapt a play set of a shepherd, some sheep, and a sheepfold. Read together or tell a Good Shepherd story (Psalm 23 & John 10). Wonder together how the sheep felt as the Good Shepherd took care of them near the sheepfold and also in the dangerous, rocky places.

Leave the play set available for play and working through this essential story.

Traditions

Light a candle to remember people you are thinking about, and to remember that Christ is our light.

Life in the Shadow of Fear

Living with Violence, Disaster, and War

The terror attacks on the U.S. on September 11, 2002, the nation's resulting military activities, and biological terrorism such as anthrax have brought new fears and worries into our lives and our children's lives. What can we do?

The experts are unanimous: return to your normal routines, keep the TV and other news to a minimum, and create opportunities for your children to express their thoughts and emotions. These three actions will help enormously as you and your children learn to manage these new fears and concerns.

There are many ways for children to express in a helpful way what's going on in their hearts. From conversation and well-chosen stories to artwork, thoughtful play, and time spent outdoors, you can plan activities that will help your child work through his or her emotions and thoughts.

Basic questions about life and death, God, evil, and war will probably arise. Do your best to answer what you can, and for the rest, wonder aloud with your child. You can definitely provide a faith-filled response to your children's fears or concerns.

In addition, if any of your family has experienced serious

trauma in the past, those once traumatized may find it much more difficult to handle these events. If life doesn't feel somewhat normal most of the time at this point, it's time to talk with a doctor, therapist, or priest. It's important to ask for help so you or your child can find the way to what so many are calling a "new normal."

Be sure to turn to your faith community and your network of family, friends, and neighbors. Go to church and Sunday school more regularly, and any special services or activities that interest you or your children. Get together with or contact your extended family a bit more often. Set up the play dates you've been meaning to plan. Invite a neighbor over for coffee.

The company of friends, family, and your faith community makes life richer at all times, and is priceless in times of worry or stress.

This process will go on as long as it needs to, if you continue to create opportunities for self-expression and respond to your family's other needs as they arise. In the midst of these new fears and concerns, your family can find its own "new normal," founded on God's care for us.

