

# PRESCHOOL CRISIS

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## CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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Your preschooler struggles with the thought of sharing a toy. How will they cope when a much bigger crisis happens to them or around them? What do you say? A preschooler may not use as many words, but there are ways to learn what they're feeling by paying attention to their verbal and nonverbal cues.

It's hard to know the right thing to say to a preschooler experiencing a crisis. The communication you give to them during a difficult time will give them the support they need to feel safe.

### **INSTILL A DEEP SENSE OF SECURITY**

When preschoolers are experiencing discomfort or have been through a crisis, there are some things you can say and do to help them feel secure. And there are some things you might say or do that could make them feel less safe. Here are a few examples of both:



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## WHAT TO SAY:

- “I’m here, you’re not alone.” (Listen to their feelings and validate them.)
- “I see you.” (Pay attention to what they mirror, watch how they play, and notice changes or regression in their behavior.)
- “I’m looking out for you.” (Adopt a preventative approach.)
- “I’ll help you when you need it.” (Adopt a reactive response.)
- “I’ll play with you/comfort you.” (Join them in their play area or space.)
- “They died—that means their body stopped working.” (Try to explain difficult concepts with simple and brief words and phrases.)
- Use few words. (Listen more than you speak.)

## WHAT **NOT** TO SAY:

- “Everything is fine. Stop crying.”
- “Why are you acting like a two-year-old?”
- “You lost your grandma [person who died].” (This is a confusing metaphor to a preschooler.)
- “I can’t handle you right now.”

When necessary, involve professional counselors.