

Helpful Hints about Children's Fears

- It can help children to know they're not alone in being afraid. Let your child know that many children (and even adults) are afraid of things, even if they don't show it.
- Listen with care when your child tells you what he or she is afraid of. Do not tease your child. Fears are real to children.
- Validate your child's feelings. You might want to say something like, "There really aren't any tigers out there, but I understand that you're scared and I'll be here to keep you safe." This reassurance will help your child feel strong.
- Stay away from things that scare your child. For example, put away a toy or book that is frightening to your child.
- Try not to force your child to do something that is scary. Forcing can make children even more afraid. Be patient.
- Give your child something to do, like yelling, "Boom!" when the thunder sounds, or turning on a nightlight or flashlight when the bedroom feels too dark.
- Ask a librarian for books that can help children deal with fears. Your child may be able to hear about something scary if it's in a book-and if you are nearby.
- If you're concerned that you'll "transfer" your own fears to your child, you could ask someone else to help in certain situations. For example, if a mother has a great fear of the dentist, the father, an aunt, or a close cousin could be the one to take a child to the dentist.
- It may help for children to draw a picture or make up a story about a particular "monster" or scary dream. When children can get the scary thing outside of themselves, whether in spoken words or drawn on paper, they're often better able to manage their fears.