

by John F. Taylor

1. Do "nothing;" let the child try to cope; remain calm.
2. Don't predict what the child will feel or do. Don't assume that the child can't master the situation.
3. Listen reflectively. Show that you understand that the child feels fear.
4. Avoid sermons on the child's being silly, chicken, sissy, scaredy-cat.
5. Tell the child that everyone has a right to feel fear.
6. Explain that fear is caused by imagination, not by external reality. Events and things are not "scary;" they are dangerous or large or sharp or difficult or unknown, but fear itself is in the child's thinking.
7. Teach the child the differences between fear and caution, encouraging the child to develop caution in place of fear.
8. Ask the child, "What should you do now?" thus encouraging concrete rather than hypothetical thinking.
9. Get the child to approach the feared situation one step at a time. Feared situations must be approached, not avoided, if fear is to be conquered.
10. Help the child gain increased knowledge and consequently develop increased caution but decreased fear. We fear that which we do not know or understand.
11. Rationally and logically undercut fear through demonstration and persuasion, without discouraging messages.
12. Be careful not to give fear-stimulating double messages that discourage the child even though they are meant to encourage. Examples: "This won't hurt very much!" "Don't cry when . . ." "Don't be afraid when . . ." "If you get scared . . ." "If this hurts too much . . ."