

Parenting Tools:

Fears



HOME
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Parenting Tools: *Fears*

From “New Parent Power!” by John Rosemond

Fears are common to three-year olds. Leading the list are fear of the dark, fear of being left alone, and fear of things that go bump in the night. Three-year-olds often misinterpret ordinary events as threatening because of the interaction of three characteristics:

1. The need to protect their recently acquired and still fragile sense of identity. As children grow in self-sufficiency, they must come to grips with the anxiety associated with letting go of their parents. Fears dramatize this process. They are symbolic, fantasy-laden expressions of the young child’s feelings of vulnerability.
2. The flowering of imaginative thought. Threes have the ability to conjure up mental images of things real and unreal but lack the ability to control the process.
3. The inability to separate word from thing. If there is a word for something, it must exist. Threes can’t separate fact from fiction because both are represented in the same medium-language. Parents often misinterpret a child’s fearfulness as a symptom of insecurity or upcoming emotional problems. They react as if the fear were the child’s way of saying, “You guys aren’t taking care of me.” They feel responsible for this anxiety, so they try to protect the child from it. Unfortunately, the parents communicate their anxieties and actually increase the child’s sense of helplessness.

Take this opportunity to teach your child that the Lord is always watching over them, and let them know that He is always there to talk to in prayer. Explain how God loves them and is taking care of them. You can read scriptures like:

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Psalm 91:11-12 “For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways. In their hands they shall bear you up, lest you dash your foot against a stone.”

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Luke 12:32 “Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”

The most effective approach is first to acknowledge the fear: “I know the dark can be frightening when you are three years old.”

Then identify with the child: “When I was three, I was afraid of the dark too.”

Finally, provide reassurance: “I’ll be downstairs in the living room, and I will take care of you.” Stay close enough to make the child feel protected, but not so close that your presence validates the fear.

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