

Counseling the Wounded Child

I. Children must understand what God says about their victimization. Children often think like Job's comforters, "Bad things happen to me because I am a bad person." God's Word teaches that He is against the oppressor and for the oppressed. Scripture warns strongly against those who would offend a child (Mt. 18:6).

Say: God loves you. You did not cause this crisis in your life.

II. Children must understand their own sin problem. Do not be afraid to share the Gospel with children. Most children have a keen insight into right and wrong and what is just. Children need to know the answer to the question is "Jesus". They need to have the opportunity to confess their sin to God and accept Jesus as their Savior.

Say: You and I are born with a sin problem but God has provided a wonderful answer to our sin problem through His Son, Jesus.

III. Listen to God and Obey His Law. Teach children God's Word, teach them to love and obey His way. His way is perfect. There are three poles of knowledge: Knowledge of God, self, and others. The knowledge of God is the most important and influence the other two. (Mt. 22: 33-39)

Adapted from *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment* by Edward T. Welch

Pray for the Children

"In the final analysis, the battle for these children is spiritual (Eph. 6: 11-12)... Our ultimate power is in asking God to heal these children; to use our efforts as expressions of His love and redemption."

-Perry Downs (from *Children in Crisis*)

Three Essentials in Counseling

I. Concrete—Children are concrete thinkers. Use the five senses when counseling children.

Avoid: Abstract terms such as "Jesus in your heart", "Grace", "Save", "Repent"

II. Creative—Have fun with the children. Children love play. Use stories, drama, puppets, art, music...

III. Celebratory—God's promises are true! Celebrate God's promises with the child. The child's life has been wounded, he needs to know the joy of the Lord.

Adapted from *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*, by Edward T. Welch

Verses To Share:

Heb. 13:5b-6a, Ps 23, 1 Pet 5:7, Jn 3:16, Rom 5:8, Jer. 31:3, Mt. 18:6, 10

Resources:

Kilbourn, Phyllis., ed. *Children in Crisis: A New Commitment*. Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1996

Lester, Andrew D. *Pastoral Care with Children in Crisis*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1985.

Lester, Andrew D. *When Children Suffer*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987.

Child Evangelism Fellowship, www.CEFpress.com 1-800-748-7710

Project HELP, WMU, www.wmu.com/wmu

For more information:

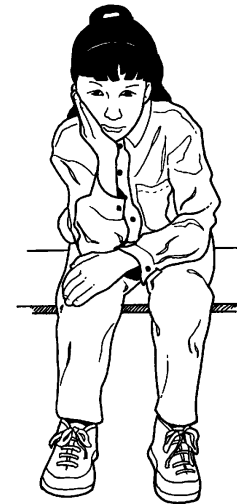
Wee Can Know, Inc.
PO Box 91184
Mobile, Alabama 36691

Cell: (251) 689-0220

E-Mail: wer1sent@juno.com

www.weecanknow.org

Children In Crisis



"For I was hungry, and you gave me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink: I was a stranger and you took me in. I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me ... Assuredly, I say to you, Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren you did it to Me."

Matthew: 25: 34-40

How to Help Hurting Children

What is a Crisis?

"A perception of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the resources and coping mechanisms of the person. Unless the person obtains relief, the crisis has the potential to cause severe affective, cognitive, and behavioral malfunctioning."

Nancy Boyd Webb

What is a Crisis to a Child?

"They include many seemingly minor events because they have not been experienced before: entry into or change in school, death of a pet, move of a friend, as well as major calamities such as divorce or death of a parent."

Andrew D. Lester

What are the Symptoms?

Children under Five:

- Regressive behaviors
- Difficulty separating from parents

Children six—eleven

- Attention problems
- Angry outburst
- Irritability
- Sleep problems
- Somatic complaints
- Depression.
- School avoidance
- Irrational fears
- Nightmares
- Withdrawn

5 Steps for the Pastor's Role:

I. Recognize that an event truly is a crisis.

II. Recognize that a school-aged children rely heavily on the existence of relationships as markers of their own intrinsic self-worth.

Avoid: Asking, "What are you feeling?" or "What's wrong?"

Do: Place yourself in the child's situations, identify with the child.

Say: I was once in a situation like yours... I felt lonely... I didn't think anyone could help me... I didn't think I needed help...

III. Recognition that children are basically good kids. Sometimes children behave badly because they have not learned more desirable coping skills.

Avoid: Asking, "Why aren't you doing good? Why are you fighting in school?"

Do: Suggest possibilities of "why" the child may be behaving certain ways.

Use: T.A.C.T.: Think As Children Think

IV. Problem-solving and helping the child adopt adaptive behavior.

Ask: Does what you are doing get you what you want?

Do: Use books with positive role models for children. Use Bible stories.

V. Solidification of the caring relationship between the pastor and the child. Many children who have been hurt will go to great lengths to test the caring adult relationship.

Do: Meet the child where they are, even if it means going all the way to them. Exemplify that they are worth your time and effort.

Adapted from Andrew D. Lester
When Children Suffer

5 Basic Needs of Children

I. Love and Acceptance.

Say: Come here, let me help you.

Don't Say: Can't you do anything right?

II. Affirmation and Support

Say: I was hoping that was you at my door! Use positive, encouraging words with a smile or high-5

Avoid: lots of "no's" and "don'ts", negative words, sharpness or tenseness in your voice

III. A Model of Stability

Knowing what to expect and what is going to happen next is especially important to children

IV. A Sense of Hope and Promise

Children frequently feel responsible for the crisis in their lives.

Do: Demonstrate the grace of God. Let children know that second chances are available.

Avoid: A perfectionist attitude

V. Our Example of Religious Faith

Children in emotional distress may be doubly impacted by who we are. Let them see Jesus in you.

Adapted from *When Children Suffer*
by Andrew D. Lester

