



WORKING WITH DIFFICULT STORIES

This situation is very challenging for everyone. You will know how your child is responding and what kinds of responses are appropriate.

It may not be possible to shield children from all the difficult events that are happening, especially when they affect your own family.

From our own experience we know that sharing our feelings can really help.

For children with special needs, we have to take care that they don't become overwhelmed. At the same time, we shouldn't assume that if we never refer to what happened, the child is not affected in some way by an event.

A mother once told me about her daughter who has profound disabilities. After her grandfather passed away, although her mother thought she had not known what had happened, she placed his photograph face down from that time on.

It's important to accept that some events do make us sad or upset – and treat it in a low key way, by reflecting the feelings back – *this is what happened. It made you sad. It makes me sad too. It's ok to feel sad.*

In telling personal stories we find the best way is to acknowledge the feelings, put them in the context of the story, allow ourselves to take a while to share them, and “sit with them” and then move towards a conclusion that is calm or positive in some way

Revisit these stories several times. Doing this will enable young people to process information, build understanding and develop resilience around a difficult event. Over time, they may ask questions or respond to a particular phrase or line through adjusted eye contact, body language or vocalisation. Leave space for them to express themselves at these moments of active participation.



Follow the story with something you know the child likes that is calming and soothing – nice food, dancing to music, massage time.

The story we have included here is about a family member who has to self isolate through illness. This can be adapted any way you like.

Finally – often our young people can actually be stronger than we are and can offer us reassurance. One young woman has a habit of saying at the end of a story where there's been an accident or sadness... "it's OK". It is really important to recognise the gifts they offer us.

You can find helpful advice here:-

Thrive promotes emotional well being in schools

<https://www.thriveapproach.com>

<https://www.butterflyprint.co.uk/product/emotional-well-journal/>

Butterfly press have a special offer on these journals

PAMIS, the Scottish charity specialising in profound and multiple disabilities has developed a range of sensitive stories

<http://pamis.org.uk/>

<https://www.epinsight.com/post/i-see-you-being-connected-during-the-coronavirus-crisis>

The charity Pictologue has a blog on managing emotions

<https://www.pictologue.co.uk/blogs/news>

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm, free for mobiles and landlines)

Thanks to Lucy Heaton, Three Ways School for advice on difficult stories.