

READING ABOUT HARD TOPICS

One of the most important and rewarding jobs we have is raising our children to be caring and competent people. We know that takes time. We know it takes many, many conversations with them. We know that some topics are uncomfortable to talk about and that can make it hard to start the conversation.

The time we spend reading together gives us a way to start many loving conversations with our children. When we dive into a book with a child, we share the experience of the story. We go on the adventure together. And when that adventure is done, we can talk together. We can express our opinions about how a character in the story handled a problem, and whether we would have handled it differently. Sharing the story can help us start a conversation about topics that are hard to talk about.

Sometimes we know we need to start talking about a difficult topic. It might be a grandparent whose health is failing, or a divorce in the family. It might be about a scary event that has been in the news. It might be about a situation your child is struggling with at school. Or it might be a happy event, such as learning a new brother or sister is on the way. Sometimes we are the one that has a hard time starting the conversation. Sometimes it is our child who doesn't know how to share what is bothering them.

There are many good children's books that deal with all these topics and many more. Your librarian can help you locate children's books on a specific topic. Most libraries also have a computerized catalogue of books that can help you find a good book to share.

Bring home the book. Read it with your child. Share how you feel about what happened in the story. Ask what they think about the story. Be prepared for them to say "it was dumb", or not to respond at all. You might want to tell them that even adults find it hard to talk about some things because it makes them too sad, or too mad.

Your child may surprise you by starting a long conversation about what they think of the situation in the story. Listen to what they have to say.

Your child may not want to say anything at all. Even if they don't respond now, the story has shown them some possibilities, and you have let them know you care

This tip sheet is being brought to you by the YMCA. YMCAs across Canada serve over 500,000 children in various programs. YMCA Canada is a member of the Abundant Assets Alliance, a partnership of YMCA Canada, the YMCA of the USA and Search Institute, working together to help young people obtain the 40 developmental assets that they need in order to thrive. To learn more about the developmental assets and how you can help your child build these assets, visit www.abundantassets.org.

One of the developmental assets that helps young people thrive is "Reading for Pleasure." This series of tip sheets and the resource, *Raising Kids Who Read*, created by YMCA Canada, helps adults build this asset with the young people in their lives. To download copies of any of these resources, go to http://www.ymca.ca/eng_ycdaresources.htm#Res6.



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strong families, strong communities.