



For Immediate Release

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www.CatholicCharitiesDM.org

Parents: Counselors offer ways to help children cope during crisis

Counselors say that being mindful of how you react in crisis situations, and first managing your own emotions, is key in helping your children get through the situation.

“How parents react and cope to the situation directly effects how children react,” says Sharon Bandstra, L.I.S.W., counselor at Catholic Charities. Bandstra says that being aware of your own fears and how you project them onto those around you is essential in helping children in crisis situations.

Counselors also say that children adjust more easily when parents manage their own anxieties and avoid focusing all on the children during a crisis.

Families are encouraged to take these steps to help reduce anxiety during crisis:

- First, consider how you manage yourself during a crisis. Children pick up on cues from parents, so if you can stay calm, it is easier for your children to stay calm.
- Have a plan of action and talk to your children about it. Preparation is key in managing family anxiety during a crisis.
- Separate facts from fears. Children tend to worry about worse case scenarios and facts can help ease some of those unrealistic fears. They may not need all of the details, but it is essential to help them sort out the facts.
- Keep things in perspective and help your children do the same.

And finally, counselors say that it is import to understand that some people may be more sensitive to external events, and may need more time to adjust and take in the information. Be aware and attentive to the specific way your child handles anxiety.

Catholic Charities Counselors have offices in downtown Des Moines, Altoona, Ankeny, Waukee, Perry and Council Bluffs. The Catholic Charities Counseling Program is based on Bowen Family Systems Theory, a theory that assists families and individuals to understand and improve human relationships. The counseling staff, which includes a bilingual therapist, works with clients of all faiths regarding a number of issues, including managing anxiety and fears during crisis situations. Fees are based on income and family size and range between \$8-\$75 per session. Evening appointments are available. To schedule an appointment contact the Des Moines office at 515-244-3761 or the Council Bluffs office at 712-328-3086.

“Guided by the teachings of the Catholic Church, we serve all people in need with compassion and competence, advocate for justice, and encourage all people of good will to share in these efforts.”