

them afraid in the past may help them deal with current ones.

When your child is afraid, patience and calmness is essential. Showing frustration or impatience does nothing to help them conquer their fears. Even when we are scared ourselves, we must remain calm for the sake of our child. I think God gives us moms an extra measure of grace to stay calm during crisis or danger. However, when a child comes and wakes you up for the fifth time in one night because of that scary noise out their window (which you had already explained was a small branch hitting the side of the house) or they become hysterical every time they needed to use an automatically flushing toilet, it is easy to become impatient and frustrated. Be firm if you need to, but remain calm. Explain to them yet again that they are perfectly safe in the particular situation (assuming they are), and pray with them. If possible, show them that everything is okay. For example, in the branch-hitting-the-side-of-the-house situation, shine a flashlight out the window so they can see the branch banging against the house. (And then maybe get your husband to trim that particular branch the next day.)

Do not allow your child to use their apprehensions to manipulate you. For example, don't let their fear of the dark cause you to let them stay up late. Likewise, do not let their fears get them out of responsibilities. If they are terrified to play at their piano recital, do not allow them to get out of it. Encourage them, pray with them, make sure they practice. Reassure them that all anyone, including God, expects is for them to do their best. And if they happen to make a mistake, people will not think less of them. But do not allow them to skip the recital. There are definite exceptions to this guideline. If they are afraid to go to a specific place or be with a certain person, there might be a good reason. But if you know they are safe, help them to conquer their fear instead of giving into it. In the long run, you will be doing them a huge favor.

It is rare that a child overcomes their fears overnight. It is usually done gradually. As hard as it may be to hear this, there are times when you can do nothing to ease your children's fear. You can pray. You can continue to talk to them and encourage them. You can share verses. You can teach them songs that will help them not to be afraid. But at times, they will continue to be anxious for a long time. Ultimately, only Jesus can give them peace. I had one child that dealt with a particular fear for years. Nothing that Jeff or I did seemed to help her overcome this. (She tells us now that knowing we were there for her was more help than it felt like at the time.) Eventually, that particular fear went away, but it was a long hard road.

As moms, we need to ask wisdom from God constantly to help our children work through their fears. Remember that "this too shall pass." While their fears seem like a huge deal when they are going through them (and they are), the seemingly unending dread that your child is dealing with now will probably seem like a blip on the radar of your active parenting years. Just tonight I was talking to a couple of my young adult kids about this article, and we were discussing their childhood fears. Honestly, in some cases, I couldn't remember who had what particular fear. I was asking, "Which of you were terrified of worms?" and "Who was it that was afraid they would go down the drain of the bathtub?" Those fears were hard to deal with at the time, but now I can't even remember which of my kids had those fears. So hang in there, Mama. The odds are very small that they will enter adulthood terrified of automated toilets. Meanwhile, may God bless you and give you grace as you help your child overcome their fears.



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