



## Helping Children Find Their Light in Dark and Scary Times



Fear can be debilitating for children, especially when it arises from a situation such as parental illness or another major change that increases their vulnerability. The COVID-19 pandemic has created this situation for many families and children.

In her note to parents and caregivers, *Ani's Light* author, Dr. Tanu Shree Singh provides guidance about supporting a child through difficult situations with empathy, caring, and honesty.

**Honesty matters.** Our first instinct in a difficult situation might be to protect our child by keeping the truth from them or creating tall tales. Though we assume they won't understand, hiding the truth rarely helps. Children have a built-in lie detector, so it's best not to lie to your child or hide basic information. Whatever the situation, share information in age-appropriate words. There are many books that deal with all sorts of difficult topics, including illness, loss, divorce, and more. These can be a great starting point for conversation.

**It is ok not to know the answers.** Some questions have no clear answers, but don't avoid them. It is okay to not know, and even better to address and accept the uncertainty together. As a parent, sometimes we overwhelm ourselves with the need to give factual answers. However, questions around death and uncertainty might have no clear answers. To accept that with your child is to take a step closer to healing.

**Help your child deal with their emotions.** Acceptance of emotions is an important part of healing and promoting resilience. Let your child know all emotions are acceptable. It is also essential for them to know that bad things can happen in life and it is no one's fault. Learning to cope and manage our feelings is what makes the difference.

**Routines are important.** Routines give a sense of security to a child. A consistent schedule and familiar faces create a sense of normalcy. Stick to regular patterns, from bedtime to school routines, as much as you can. Everyone is creating new daily routines during the pandemic. Do what works for your family.

Check out *Ani's Light* here: [www.apa.org/pubs/magination/anis-light](http://www.apa.org/pubs/magination/anis-light)

**Plan for fun.** Children need a break. Sometimes we get so caught up in managing problems that we forget that children need doses of fun. Try to schedule some fun time together.

**Seek help.** Life gets overwhelming when illness or huge changes are taking up all our time and energy. In such situations, such as those created by the COVID-19 pandemic, we need to be vigilant and seek professional help as needed.

Ultimately, the heart and mind have an enormous capacity to heal. All we can do as a parent is to be there and help our children learn to see love, grow resilience, and be reassured that letting the light in can help them through dark times.

To find a therapist near you, use the [APA Psychologist Locator](#).

### This Article's Author

**Dr. Tanu Shree Singh** is an assistant professor of psychology in the Department of Higher Education, Haryana, India. She completed her studies in positive psychology at Maharshi Dayanand University and writes extensively on issues related to parenting. Her approach to parenting, rooted in her academic background, draws heavily from her experiences as a parent and a mentor. Her passion for reading and getting more children to read led her to set up two libraries in Faridabad and Tirthan Valley. She lives in Faridabad, India.

### Ani's Light

*Ani's Light* is a sensitive, hopeful story will help kids explore their sadness when a close family member is undergoing medical treatment, while highlighting sources of light that can bring stability during uncertain times. It is also a terrific resource for anyone who wants to understand how coping has its ups and downs. Includes a Note to Parents and Caregivers explaining ways to help a child cope.

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