



Taking Fear Out of Fire Drills

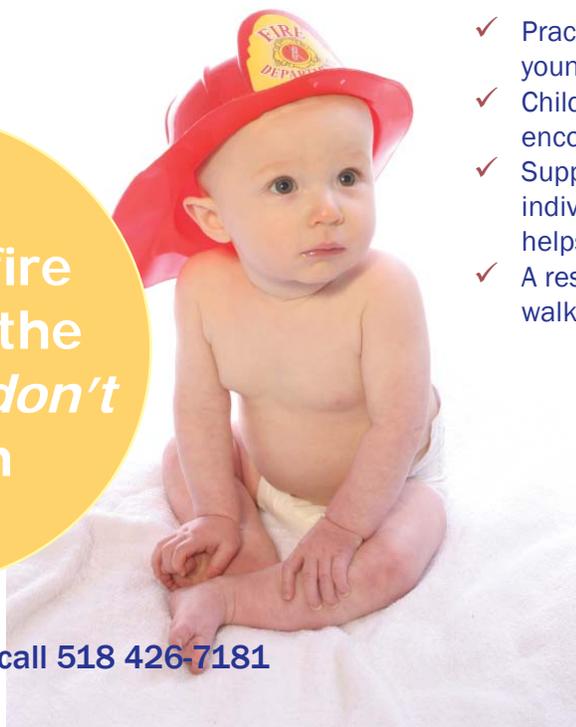
Many fears begin during toddlerhood; fear of animals, masks, loud machines such as vacuums and motorcycles, monsters, fire, and being separated from their families. Responsive caregivers can help toddlers cope with fears by discussing with children what is real and what is happening around them during fearful times. Children naturally seek out significant adults to help them organize their feelings when they are uncomfortably challenged. By modeling calm and responsive support, adults can help children eventually grow out of these fears and grow into empathetic caregivers themselves. No child is too young to practice fire drills. Smoke and other detectors can go off at any time. Early experiences build knowledge and knowledge then becomes power. Statistics show that those who practice fire drills have a 50% greater chance of surviving the emergency.

Although some children find fire drills to be very alarming, they are an important part of a safety plan. When tenderly supported by familiar adults, children can begin to develop coping skills that will last through adulthood. Responsive caregivers support children as they experience all kinds of feelings associated with fire drills.

Caregivers can

- Talk about fire drills when children are calm.
 - Use a calm voice while sharing simple words children can understand.
 - Point out /label fire bells as children see them every day.
 - Support/include parents by notifying them that their child will be experiencing a fire drill so they can have at-home discussions with children as well.
 - Read several children's books about fire drills, for example:
 - [Arthur's Fire Drill](#) by Marc Brown
 - [Fire Drill](#) by Paul DuBois Jacobs
 - Make a book by taking photos of the care environment; fire bells, exits, and meeting places.
 - Set up a play area that encourages children to act out fire drills. This can be as simple as having children color a box with a cut out door and windows, magazine pictures of children and adults taped to wooden blocks, a tapping bell for children to ring themselves, and toy fire trucks.
 - Make a book or story chart directly after a fire drill that authentically expresses children's thoughts and feelings.
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- ✓ Practicing with favorite adults is the best way to help young children stay calm during fearful experiences.
 - ✓ Children begin to develop coping skills when encouraged to play out fearful scenarios
 - ✓ Supporting children according to their individual sensitivities and temperaments helps their learning progress.
 - ✓ A responsive caregiver empowers children by walking *through* challenges hand-in-hand.

The scariest fire drills are the ones that *don't* happen



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