**CONFRONTING FEARS**

Children experience many fears. It's

natural. Some children confront and

overcome these fears; others retain them

into adulthood. Leaders who understand

what triggers childhood fears are better

prepared to help little ones gripped by

anxiety. ***What can you do to help?***

**Childhood Fears**

Research shows that most young

children experience seven

different types of fears. Boys

have just as many fears as girls

but are least likely to tell an

adult. Male stereotypes are

beginning to influence young

boys as they develop a gender

image. By age six, a boy might

not appear to be less than a

"real man."

Fears are linked to a child's

personal development. All

children have a natural fear

of falling and loud noises at

birth. New fears emerge as a

child becomes more aware

of their surroundings and

the greater world.

Children can't always

tell the difference

between fantasy and

reality. It is not

unusual for some

youngsters to think certain

fairy tale characters are actually real.

As children grow beyond mere concrete

thinkers, their imaginations may run

wild. They will struggle with fears of the

dark, ghosts, monsters, aliens and other

supernatural creatures. Avoidance of scary

ghosts at this age is recommended.

Real world events and facts can also

create fear. Televison news which depict

graphic horror from war, famine and

bombings can create an impression that

these events are happening right outside

their home. Children watching graphic

news can develop identical fears as those

youth who actually live in the violent areas.

Natural occurrences such as storms and

lightning can overwhelm a child with

the immensity of forces at play. The list

below highlights common fears experienced

by young children.

**Five Years**

Animals, *bad* people, the dark,

separation of parents, bodily harm.

**Six Years**

Supernatural beings, bodily

injury, thunder and lightning,

the dark, sleeping or staying

alone, separation from

parents.

**Seven–Eight Years**

Supernatural beings,

the dark, fears based

on media events,

staying alone,

bodily harm.

**Responding**

**to a Child's**

**Fears**

All children get

frightened. Use

these tips to

help reduce

their fears.

**Never Belittle**

**a Child's Fear**

Adults tend to downplay or ignore fears

e.g. "Don't be silly. It's only thunder."

Teasing a child is counter-productive

as it drives the fear underground. *Out*

*of sight* is not *out of mind*. Children

need to know that adults take them

seriously.

**Don't Force a Fear of Confrontation**

Exposing a child to an *all at once* fear

experience may firmly entrench the fear.

**Work on Beating the Fear**

When confronting fear, approach it

slowly. Talk with the child. How would

he like you to help him beat the

problem?

*Source: Canadian*