TOUGH TOPICS: Inspiring Conversations in Difficult Times

Resources for Adults

Books


Covering topics including poverty, divorce, neglect, homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence and parent incarceration, this workbook style resource for K-12 educators shows how the school community can work together to assist children impacted by these issues.

Tender Topics: Picture Books About Childhood Challenges


Grouped by topics such as life lessons, divorce, and trauma, this listing of more than 300 picture books with annotations are recommended to get adults and children talking about the subjects.

After #MeToo: Educators Seek Strategies To Teach Students About Consent


With systemic harassment and assault in the news, educators are teaching age appropriate lessons about boundaries, safety, and sexual assault.

Tender Topics: Exploring Sensitive Issues with Pre-K through First Grade Children


A graded, annotated list of books for children about topics such as bullying, death, divorce, tragedy and disaster, with suggestions for how to use books to explore difficult issues with young children.

Parents Explain the Me Too Movement To Their Kids


Gaston is a bulldog puppy who doesn’t look quite right in his puddle pack, but learns that love is what makes a family.

Toucan Library: Inspiring Conversations in Difficult Times


Consent

Talking to Cyberbullied Kids—and to Bullies


This article includes links to eight websites on coping with cyberbullying.

How You Teach Kids About Consent


A list of parenting action items (geared toward kids ages 2-12) created in the hope of raising a generation of children who have less rape and sexual assault in their lives.

Websites

How to Talk about Difficult Topics with Children


A brief overview of how to proceed after a tragedy, which includes the following domains and web links:

• "Disaster Distress Hotline"—SAMHSA.gov
• "Listen, Protect, Connect—Psychological First Aid for Teacher & Students"—Ready.gov
• "Tips for Talking with and Helping Children and Youth cope after a Disaster or Traumatic Event"—A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers—SAMHSA.gov
• "Helpful Hints for School Emergency Managers"—Psychological First Aid for Students and Teachers: Listen, Protect, Connect, Model & Teach—U.S. Department of Education
• "Explaining the News to Our Kids"—CommonSenseMedia.org
• "Children & Grief: Guidance and Support Resources"—Scholastic.com
• "The Road to Resilience"—4PA.org

Adoption

Gaston


Lester is happy when he is adopted by Daddy Albert and Daddy Rich, however at night he finds he cannot fall asleep because he is alone and wonders when he will feel truly at "home."

Just Right Family: An Adoption Story


MeiLii thinks that getting a puppy would be better than a little sister. The whole family prepares for the new baby to arrive, and when she does, she’s just right—like their family.

A Most Unusual Day


As Albert and Daddy Rich, however at night he anxiously makes her way through an important day.

Home at Last


When MeiLii learns to face them.

How to Talk to Children about Difficult News and Tragedies


A #MeToo movement with their children, showing them how to talk about and explore difficult issues with young children.

An Adoption Story


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I Walk With Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness
By Karasucoat
Troubled after seeing a classmate being bullied, a young girl takes simple but courageous action in this inspiring, wordless picture book.

Red
By Jan de Kinder. Tr. by Laura Watkinson
Candamain. 2015. 32p.
A girl and her friends laugh when a classmate blushes on the playground. When one student takes the teasing and bullying too far, the girl must make a critical decision.

Super Manny Stands Up
By Kelly DiPucchio. IIs by Stephanie Graegin
Every day, Manny battles imaginary hordes of giants, cloud monsters and zombie bears. When he’s faced with a bully in the school cafeteria, will he have the courage to do what he knows is right?

Body Safety
By Kimberly and Zach King. Ills. by Sue Ramírez
Zack and his mom have a conversation about proper and improper touching, and different ways to handle “red flag” situations. Open-ended questions for discussion make this a versatile resource.

Miles is the Boss of His Body
By Samantha Kuntz-Creutzer and Abbie Schiller
The Miller Company. 2014. 32p.
On his 6th birthday, Miles, a child who feels invisible, uses art and drawing to keep from feeling lonely, until a new student to class befriends him.

Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept
By Ayesha Sanders. Ills. by Craig Smith
Alfred gets along with Lord Henry really well until one day Lord Henry began to tickle him in a way that made him uncomfortable. Alfred learns that some secrets should never be kept.

Divorce/Simple Parent
I Love You More Than...
By Ilye Dorg. Ills. by Shane W. Evans
Portraying the separation of a child from a parent, the story reinforces the message of love and reassurance.

Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend
By Karen Stanton
Traveling between his mother’s house and his father’s house causes confusion for Henry Cooper and his dog. Pomegranate. Which is “home”?

Walk With Me
By Jane Bartrum. Ills. by Rafael Huiciang
Although her father no longer lives at her home, a little girl moves about her day encouraged by her enduring presence.

Weekends with Max and His Dad
By Linda Urias. Ills. by Katia Koth
Third-grader Max adapts to his parents’ recent divorce. During their visits, Max and his loving and humorous father play spies, work on homework, sing, and eat lots of pizza together.

Grief
Blue
By Laura Vaccaro Seeger
This story celebrates the bond of friendship between a boy and his dog, and sensitively portrays the difficult emotions of dealing with the dog’s death.

Death is Stupid
By Anastasia Higginbotham
The FireMont Press at CUNY. 2016. 64p.
In a candid look at death, this book acknowledges the anger, fear and confusion that we all feel when confronted with the fragility of life.

The Pond
By Nicola Davies. Ills. by Cathy Fisher
Told from the perspective of a young boy dealing with the loss of his father, this story communicates the experience of grief in a touching and loving manner while centering on the evolution of a small pond.

The Rabbit Listened
By Coli Dourfant
A young boy deals with loss by talking to all of the stuffed animals in his house. Each of the animals tries to “fix” the problem for him, but in the end, the rabbit just listens, and helps the boy most of all.

A Stone for Sascha
By Aaron Becker
A beloved family dog passes away and through a stone of grief cast by a little girl, travels through the cosmos to time immortal.

Where Do We Go?
By Julia Ahenou. Ills. by Sabra Field
Triumph Square. 2016. 32p.
In poetic form, this book provides answers to many tough questions children have about death.

Immigration
Carmela Full of Wishes
By Matt De la Pena. Ills. by Christian Robinson
Carmela has lots of wishes on her birthday, but her most important wish is for her father to get his immigration papers so he can come home.

Dreamers
By Kobi Yamada, Illus. by Mae Besom
The author illustrates the story of how she and her son arrived in the United States as immigrants, showing her appreciation for the part the public library played in their transformation and the making of a new home.

The Journey
By Francesca Sanna
“Last year ours lives changed forever”…so begins one family’s heartbreakening journey as refugees. This is one family’s story and yet it is also a universal story of leaving, losing, and ultimately hoping for a better future.

A Piece of Home
By Jeni Watts. Ills. by Hyewon Yum
Hye Jun and his family are slowly adjusting to their new home in America but it is difficult when everything is different and new.

Natural Disaster
Flood
By Mirae F. Villasen.
This wordless picture book shows the devastation caused by a natural disaster, as well as the resilience and hopefulness of a family whose home has been destroyed.

Dreamers
By Kobi Yamada, Illus. by Rika Tócsa
A child has a problem and is afraid to confront it; when he finally does, he learns it is not exactly what was expected.

What Do You Do With a Problem?
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A child with a problem is afraid to confront it; when he finally does, he learns it is not exactly what was expected.

A Piece of Home
By Sarah Lynne Reul
When bad news leaves her parents scared and worried, a little girl finds that small acts of kindness can help in a big way.

The Invisible Boy
By Trudy Ludwig. Ills. by Patrica Barton.
A shy young boy who feels invisible uses art and drawing to keep from feeling lonely, until a new student to class befriends him.

The Day War Came
By Nicole Davies. Ills. by Rebecca Cobé
Cardamom. 2016. 48p.
The war that comes to a young girl’s town not only leaves it in rubble, it leaves her trying to find a place and people that war hasn’t reached - both physically and emotionally.

The Forgiveness Garden
By Laura Thompson. Ills. by Christy Hale
Two children, weary of generations of fighting and violence between their villages, take a courageous step toward peace by building a garden together: inspired by the Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon.

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Yard Sale
By Eve Bunting. Illus. by Lauren Castillo
Cardamom. 2016. 32p.
With her family downvoting from a house to a small apartment, a young girl remembers about the items she is saying goodbye to at their yard sale.

Illness (Catastrophic)
Cancer Hats Kisses
By Jessica Bell Slowinski. Illus. by Mia Song
A child sees her Mama fight cancer like a superhero, and joins in the fight with kisses, hugs and love.

The Remember Balloons
By Jamie Skrown. Illus. by Zara Wufhustler
Through metaphor, this sensitive picture book explains memory loss associated with aging and diseases such as Alzheimer’s.

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A beloved family dog passes away and through the stone of grief cast by a little girl, travels through the cosmos to time immortal.

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