

Reasoning That Comforts Older Frightened Children

For Fantasy Threats:

For 8-year-olds and older -- get them to focus on the impossibility of the fantastic events

For younger children -- visually demonstrate the unreal status of the frightening occurrence (for example, help them apply scary make-up)

For Real Threats:

Give them calming, absolute, but limited truthful information

Use their fears as a teachable moment, and offer safety guidelines about how to protect themselves

Talk to them sympathetically about their fears, even when there's nothing particularly reassuring to say.

Seek professional help if fears are uncontrollable or overpowering

Seek your child's cooperation in avoiding future exposure to similar content

From: "Mommy I'm Scared": How TV and Movies Frighten Children and What We Can Do to Protect Them. Harvest/Harcourt, 1998.