

## **Talking to Children about Violence**

It can be difficult to talk to children about violent incidents because we want to protect their innocence. However, children may hear from others at school, the neighborhood, on the news, or on social media and they may have questions and concerns. [Talking to Children About Violence](#) is a resource from the National Association of School Psychologists.

1. **Reassure children that they are safe.** Emphasize that our community is very safe. Validate their feelings. Explain that all feelings are okay. Let children talk about their feelings.
2. **Make time to talk.** Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their feelings readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes.
3. **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
  - **Early elementary school** children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of how the school and home create a safe place.
  - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done to keep them safe.
  - **Upper middle school and high school** students will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence. Emphasize the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines and telling an adult of any concerns.
4. **Review safety procedures.** This should include procedures and safeguards at school and at home. Help children identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they go if they feel threatened or at risk.
5. **Observe children's emotional state.** Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and time.
6. **Limit television viewing of these events.** Limit television viewing and be aware if the television is on in common areas. Developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Adults also need to be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with children around.
7. **Maintain a normal routine.** Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring.