

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT VIOLENCE: TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS

Families and school personnel play a critical role in helping to reestablish a sense of normalcy and security for children after an act of violence occurs. Follow these key reminders and visit www.nasponline.org/children-and-violence to learn more.

KEEP EXPLANATIONS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

Early Elementary

Provide simple information and concrete examples balanced by assurance of safety.

Upper Elementary and Early Middle School

Answer questions and assist in separating reality from fantasy.

Upper Middle & High School

Emphasize students' role in safety & how to access support.

REAFFIRM SAFETY

- Emphasize that schools are very safe.
- Let children speak about their feelings and validate reactions to the event.
- Support the appropriate expression of their feelings and help to put them in perspective.



MAKE TIME TO TALK

- Let children's questions guide the information provided. Be patient and look for clues that a child wants to talk.
- Young children may need concrete activities (e.g., imaginative play) while some older children may prefer writing or playing music.



REVIEW SAFETY PROCEDURES

- Help children identify an adult at school and in the community that they can go to if they feel threatened or at risk.
- Review procedures and safeguards in school and home settings.



MONITOR EMOTIONAL STATE

- Some children will not express themselves verbally but changes in behavior, appetite, or sleep patterns can indicate anxiety or stress.
- Seek help from a mental health professional for those with more intense reactions that last more than 2 weeks.



MAINTAIN A NORMAL ROUTINE

- Keep a regular schedule and healthy nutrition, sleep and exercise to promote physical and mental health.
- Encourage maintenance of school work and extracurricular activities but do not push children who seem overwhelmed.
- Limit exposure to images or graphic reference to the event (e.g., TV and social media)..



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For additional guidance, visit
www.nasponline.org/safety-and-crisis.

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