

Suggestions for helping children deal with tragedy

As a parent, it is difficult to talk to your children about tragic events such as those that happened in Connecticut last week. We are all overwhelmed with feelings of fear, anger, and helplessness. Children look to their parents to feel safe. Here are some tips to help them deal with this tragedy.

- Talk to your child about the events. Children will be talking at school or at play about these events. These accounts may not be accurate.
- Acknowledge that your children may have feelings of fear, anger, etc. Allow them the opportunity to express these feelings verbally, in writing, or drawings.
- Younger children are less verbal and may need to draw or be asked open ended questions to begin sharing their feelings.
- Answer your children's questions openly and honestly without dwelling on details or bringing up suppositions. Let them see your feelings. This is a learning opportunity to teach them how you deal with your own feelings.
- Keep home a safe place and keep children in a regular routine. Watch for signs of stress, fear, or anxiety. Some examples may be:
 1. Over dependency on an adult
 2. Crying
 3. Irritability
 4. Fits of anger
 5. Withdrawal
- Take "news breaks" Limit the time spent watching the coverage. Too much exposure could heighten fears and anxiety

If you or your children are having an extremely difficult time handling this, feel free to talk to your school counselor or contact other mental health professionals.

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