

How To Talk To Your Children About What They See On The News



Bad, scary, or negative news can be traumatic for children of all ages. “Bad” news can be anything; natural disasters, local or global political strife, mass shootings, the fallout from the drug epidemic, or even a fire in your neighborhood. *It is important for parents to be prepared to talk with their children about things they may see and hear on the news. Here are some tips to help you get started.*

First, Take Care of Yourself

Process your own feelings related to the event. Then you can model appropriate expressions of sadness, worry, or anger that will normalize those feelings experienced by your child. Children often look to their parents to make sense of how they are feeling. *This is a great opportunity to build empathy for others.*

Next, Be Honest with Them

A truthful approach will help them better understand the facts about what they are hearing. Frequently our children are already hearing about events through social media or what they hear from friends. Listen as they tell you what they already know and *try and separate facts from rumors and embellishments.*

Always Listen to Their Questions and Address Their Concerns

Younger children may need reassurance that they are safe, while your older kids may have more in-depth questions to help them understand and process. Be patient. It is completely normal if a child doesn’t have much to say in the beginning. *Let your child know that you are there whenever they have questions or want to talk more.* It is important to address their concerns as they arise and offer your perspective based on your family’s values.

Finally, Offer Them Hope

Reassure them that they are safe and talk through their feelings. Develop a plan for your family in case they encounter dangerous situations. Unplug from media for a while and spend some quiet time together as a family. Physical comfort such as a hug can go a long way to a child developing a sense of inner security. You can also research ways your family can help families affected by these tragedies. *Look for the stories of the helpers and the heroes in these events to balance to reinforce that there is so much good even in times of tragedy.*