

Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents 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.



Reaffirm Safety

Emphasize that schools are very safe. Let children speak about their feelings and validate all 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) and some older children may prefer writing or playing music.



Keep Explanations Developmentally Appropriate

Early Elementary

Provide simple information balanced by assurance of safety.

Upper Elementary & Early Middle

Answer questions and assist in separating reality from fantasy.

Upper Middle & High

Emphasize student role in safety & how to access support.



Review Safety Procedures

Help children identify one 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.



Observe Children's Emotional State

Some 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.



Maintain a Normal Routine

Keep a regular schedule to assure and promote physical and mental health. Encourage maintenance of school work and extracurricular activities but do not push children if they seem overwhelmed. Limit TV exposure.