



Tips for Teachers and Parents Following School and Community Violence



When a national tragedy occurs, such as a shooting at school, terrorist attack, or natural disaster, people will be confused or frightened—especially children. Most likely they will look to adults for information and guidance on how to react. Parents and school personnel should help children cope by establishing a sense of safety and security. As more information becomes available, adults can continue to help children work through their emotions and perhaps even use the process as a learning experience.

General Tips for All Adults

- Model calm and controlled behaviors
- Reassure children that they are safe and (if true) so are the other important adults in their lives
- Let children know that it is okay to feel upset
- Observe children's emotional state
- Tell children the truth and answer the questions they may have honestly

General Tips for All Adults (continued)

- Stick to the facts
- Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate
- For all children, encourage them to verbalize their thoughts and feelings
 - » Be a good listener!
- You may need extra help for those with special needs

General Tips for All Adults (continued)

- Monitor your own stress level
- Monitor social media (i.e. Internet, Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
- Review safety procedures

What Parents Can Do

- Focus on your child over the week following the tragedy & offer extra reassurance about their safety
- Spend extra time reading or playing quiet games before bed
- Make time to talk with your children each day
- Let children express their emotions

What Parents Can Do (continued)

- Give plenty of hugs! Many children will want actual physical contact
- Safeguard your child's physical health
- Maintain a "normal" routine... *but don't be inflexible*
- Consider thinking and expressing hopeful thoughts

What Parents Can Do (continued)

- Find out what resources your school has in place to help children cope
- Limit or stop TV viewing of these events, particularly if they impact your child or you; be aware if the TV or radio is on in the background
- Monitor Internet and social media, Twitter, and text messages (SMS/AIM)

What Teachers Can Do

- Assure your students that they are safe
- Maintain structure and stability...Routine is good!
- Provide information directly to your students in a calm factual way and dispel rumors
- Seek support from school psychologists, school counselors, school social workers, and school nurses

What Teachers Can Do (continued)

- Be aware of students who may have recently experienced a personal tragedy or have a connection to the victim(s) in some way
- Be mindful of children who exhibit extreme anxiety, fear, or anger
- Be aware of those who appear too distant or quiet, which is “not their typical self”
- Know what community resources are available

What Teachers Can Do (continued)

- Conduct age appropriate classroom discussions and activities
- Provide an outlet for students' desire to help (e.g., letters of support to the impacted community, fundraising if appropriate, etc.)

Suggested points to emphasize when talking to children

- Senseless violence is hard for everyone to understand
- Sometimes people do terrible things that hurt others
- Stay away from guns and other weapons
- Violence is never a solution to personal problems
- Tell an adult if you or someone else hear or see someone threaten you or your classmates

NASP Resources to Share

www.nasponline.org:

- » Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf
- » Managing Strong Emotional Reactions to Traumatic Events: Tips for Parents and Teachers
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/angermgmt_general.aspx
- » Helping Children Cope With Crisis: Care for Caregivers
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/CaregiverTips.pdf
- » Tips for School Administrators for Reinforcing School Safety
http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/schoolsafety_admin.aspx



NASP represents school psychology and supports school psychologists to enhance the learning and mental health of all children and youth.



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