

Tips for Talking to your Child about Difficult Subjects

1. Find out what your child has seen or heard.

Once you understand what your child's concerns are, you are in a better place to be reassuring.

2. Be aware of your own emotional state.

Your child knows when you are angry or upset. It's important to be emotionally honest, but also important to shield your child from feelings that may overwhelm them.

3. Be reassuring.

The easiest way to help a child to feel safe and secure is to maintain their normal routine. This lets the child understand that even in the wake of the bad thing that has happened, their world will continue as before.

4. Don't provide unnecessary details.

Keep answers brief, simple and age-appropriate.

5. Monitor TV and media exposure.

Overexposure to the event through TV, radio, internet, or newspaper can overwhelm your child.

6. Keep the door open for further discussion.

Your child may need to think about the answers you have provided for awhile before coming back with questions of their own. Let them know that they can come to you with questions any time.

Additional Resources:

Talking with Children about Difficult Subjects (NYU Child Study Center)

http://www.aboutourkids.org/articles/talking_children_about_difficult_subjects_illness_death_violence_disaster

Talking to Children After a Tragedy (education.com)

<http://www.education.com/reference/article/talking-to-children-after-a-tragedy/>

Navigating the Tough Topics: Talking with Your Children About Threatening Events (Psychology Today)

<http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/dont-worry-mom/201203/navigating-the-tough-topics>

Talking with Kids About Tough Topics (pbskids.org)

http://www.pbs.org/parents/talkingwithkids/strategies_10.html

Talking to Children about Violence (National Association of School Psychologists)

http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/talkingviolence.pdf