



employee assistance

Talking to Children about Traumatic Events in the News

While it is nearly impossible to completely shield children from witnessing or hearing about traumatic or violent events in the world, parents can provide comfort, reassurance, and healthy communication to address fears and confusion in difficult times.

1. Start the Conversation

Simply asking, “What have you heard?” in reference to any major incident will prompt the child to share anything overheard at school or in the media, and help the parent know exactly what the child is aware of, where information is coming from, and gauge the emotional impact.

2. Correct Misinformation

After listening to the child express their understanding of events, parents can tailor the level of detail and clarifying information they provide based on the child’s age. For older children, it is also helpful to search for information and answers together and discuss any concerns in real-time.

3. Encourage Emotional Expression

Parents can encourage children to express any emotion that arises, which can include sadness, fear, anxiety, stress, confusion, or any other response. If a child is having trouble verbalizing

emotions, it may be helpful to use drawing, writing or play.

4. Provide Reassurance

While parents may feel the urge to jump in saying, “Don’t be silly,” or shout, “No, of course not!” and dismiss any feelings immediately, it is more helpful to listen openly and express understanding first, and then clarify or provide reassurance.

5. Support Action

Whether it is writing letters, donating goods, or volunteering to help, families can work together to provide service and assistance in the face of difficult events. Encouraging action helps alleviate a sense of helplessness and channels that emotion into positive change.

If children of any age are exhibiting behavioral changes or seem especially bothered by an event, consider seeking a consultation with a mental health professional through ACI’s Employee Assistance Program. Mental health professionals can help children individually or even work with the family as a unit to help restore a child’s sense of safety and stability after a traumatic event. ACI’s EAP covers employees and all family members, contact ACI anytime at 855.775.4357 or rsli@acieap.com.

Questions?

Contact ACI Specialty Benefits toll-free at
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