

Pointers For Parents

How To Talk To Your Child About War

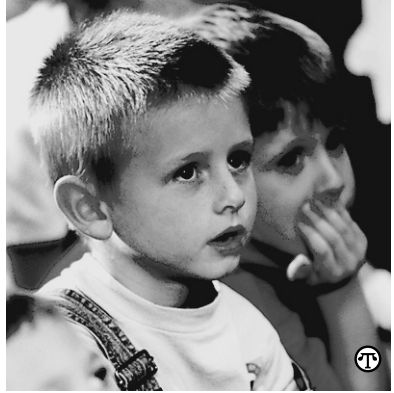
(NAPSA)—Lately, it seems not a day goes by without talk of war in the news. If it's worrying you, you may be wondering how it affects your child. Helping children deal with their reactions to scary news can be challenging, especially when adults themselves are uneasy.

"Children develop their emotional reactions in part by observing adults," said Barbara Anderson, Ed.D, vice president of education for KinderCare Learning Centers, which operates more than 1,250 early childhood education and childcare centers nationwide. "If you don't talk about it, your child may get the idea that the subject is too terrifying to speak of."

Children should not be pressured, Anderson said, but talking with a grownup can help them clarify their feelings and keep things in perspective. She has some suggestions on ways to keep these discussions from becoming too frightening.

Start by using words children can understand and gear your explanations to the child's age and developmental level. Preschoolers may hear things they don't understand and become frightened, so keep the television and radio turned off when they are near and don't talk about war unless they ask. If they do, only answer the question they asked and use clear and simple language. Above all, let them know that they are safe.

For school-age children, Anderson said it's best to ask questions to find out what they have heard or how much they know. Ask open-ended questions that will encourage them to talk, such as "How do you feel about what you see on the



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news?" Try to provide honest answers in simple terms and correct any misinformation. Again, assure them that they are safe.

While it's fine to share your own feelings, do so in a reassuring way. For example, you might say, "I was scared when I heard them talking about war on the news, but I knew it was happening very far away." Avoid lectures about the issue. Strongly voiced opinions on the subject may inadvertently overshadow your child's thoughts and feelings.

Also, don't make unrealistic promises. "It's fine to let children know that they are safe in their home or school," Anderson said, "But you can't promise them that nothing will ever happen here at home."

Anderson recommends supporting children by helping them understand that it's natural to feel afraid. Encourage children to talk about their feelings and make sure they know that you will do everything in your power to keep them safe.