



Pointers For Parents

America's Tragedy And Kids: What Parents Should Say—And Look For

(NAPSA)—To help parents with the after-effects of the September 11 terror attack and all that followed, the national children's crisis charity KidsPeace has compiled some tips for talking to children about the tragedy.

KidsPeace president and CEO C.T. O'Donnell II and the clinical experts at KidsPeace, suggest the following guidelines for helping your children:

1. Listen to children. Allow them to express their concerns and fears.

2. Regardless of age, the most important issue is to reassure children of safety and security. Tell children that you, their schools, their friends and their communities are all focused on their safety.

3. When discussing the events with younger children, the amount of information shared should be limited to basic facts. Use words meaningful to them (not words like terrorist, retribution, etc.). Share with them that some bad people have used violence to hurt innocent people in the United States. Discuss that we don't know exactly by whom or why this was done, but violence has occurred. Do not go into specific details.

4. School-aged children will ask, "Can this happen here, or to me?" Do not lie to children. Share that it is unlikely that anything like this will happen to them or in their community. Then reiterate how safe and protected they are by all those around them.

5. Parents, caregivers and teachers should be cautious of permitting young children to watch news or listen to radio that is discussing or showing carnage. It is



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too difficult for most of them to process. Personal discussions are the best way to share information with this group. Also, plan to discuss this many times over the coming weeks. Ongoing reassurance is critical to children.

6. When discussing the events with preteens and teens, more detail is appropriate, and many will already have seen news broadcasts. Do not let them focus too much on graphic details. Rather, elicit their feelings and concerns and focus your discussions on what they share with you. Be careful of how much media they are exposed to. Talk directly with them about the tragedy and answer their questions truthfully.

7. Although this group is more mature, do not forget to reassure them of their safety and your efforts to protect them. Regardless of age, kids must hear this message.

8. Be aware of physical symptoms of anxiety that children may demonstrate. They may be a sign that a child, although not directly discussing the tragedy, is very troubled by the events. Talk more directly to children who exhibit these signs:

- Headaches
- Stomach aches
- Back aches
- Trouble sleeping or eating
- Nightmares
- Withdrawal
- Excessive worry
- Increased arguing
- Irritability
- Loss of concentration
- Refusal to go to school
- Clinging behavior

9. Frequently reassure children that they are loved. Words expressing love combined with deeds demonstrating love (for example, walks in the park or attending a community sporting event) can provide the most comfort to children and teens.

10. If you are concerned about your children or their reaction to this or any tragedy, talk directly with their school counselor, family doctor, or have your older children visit the KidsPeace teen-help Web site, www.teencentral.net, which provides anonymous and clinically-screened help and resources for teen problems before they become overwhelming.

KidsPeace is a 119-year-old charity dedicated to helping give kids the confidence, skills and resources to overcome crisis, including traumas, depression and the stresses of modern life. For information, visit www.kidspeace.org. For information for teens, visit www.teencentral.net.