

# TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT VIOLENCE: TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND EDUCATORS

Families and school personnel play a critical role in helping to reestablish a sense of normalcy and security for children after an act of violence occurs. Follow these key reminders and visit [www.nasponline.org/children-and-violence](http://www.nasponline.org/children-and-violence) to learn more.

## KEEP EXPLANATIONS DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE

### Early Elementary

Provide simple information and concrete examples balanced by assurance of safety.

### Upper Elementary and Early Middle School

Answer questions and assist in separating reality from fantasy.

### Upper Middle & High School

Emphasize students' role in safety & how to access support.

## REAFFIRM SAFETY



- Emphasize that schools are very safe.
- Let children speak about their feelings and validate reactions to the event.
- Support the appropriate expression of their feelings and help to put them in perspective.

## MAKE TIME TO TALK



- Let children's questions guide the information provided. Be patient and look for clues that a child wants to talk.
- Young children may need concrete activities (e.g., imaginative play) while some older children may prefer writing or playing music.

## REVIEW SAFETY PROCEDURES



- Help children identify an adult at school and in the community that they can go to if they feel threatened or at risk.
- Review procedures and safeguards in school and home settings.

## MONITOR EMOTIONAL STATE



- Some children will not express themselves verbally but changes in behavior, appetite, or sleep patterns can indicate anxiety or stress.
- Seek help from a mental health professional for those with more intense reactions that last more than 2 weeks.

## MAINTAIN A NORMAL ROUTINE



- Keep a regular schedule and healthy nutrition, sleep and exercise to promote physical and mental health.
- Encourage maintenance of school work and extracurricular activities but do not push children who seem overwhelmed.
- Limit exposure to images or graphic reference to the event (e.g., TV and social media)..