



5 Tips for How to Talk to Children About School Shootings

1. Start the conversation.

It may never seem like the right time to start a discussion about school shootings with your child. But, not talking about it can lead to feelings of worry and confusion while also opening the door to misinformation.

2. Emphasize safety.

Start by asking your child what they already know about school shootings. Allow them to express their concerns and ask questions. Reassure them and be honest – don't lie to them. Address any inaccurate concerns that they may have (e.g., school shootings happen frequently; children are not safe at school). Don't go into graphic details, put the emphasis on safety, and help them identify the plans in place to protect them in all types of emergencies.

3. Reiterate that it's normal to be scared.

Everyone feels afraid when they're in danger. Fear is how our bodies alert us and prepare us for action in times of danger. Help children understand that their natural reactions are normal.

4. Look for leaders.

Remind your child that adults – teachers, leaders and first responders – are working every day to keep them safe at school. The emergency drills that they may practice in the classroom are an example of this.

5. Watch for signs of trauma.

It's normal for children to be a little anxious about school shootings and emergency drills. If children appear extremely fearful, angry or withdrawn during or following an exercise, seek professional help. Involve mental health professionals in the development and implementation of drills and exercises.