

The effects of trauma in children may linger and manifest themselves physically and behaviorally. Here are 10 Tips to help parents and educators talk to children about what has occurred and look for future signs of distress:

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 school, their friends and their communities are all focused on their safety and that those around them are working for their safety. Have discussions about those dedicated to protecting them like police, teachers and other school officials, neighbors and all concerned adults throughout the community.
3. When discussing the events with young children, **share limited basic facts instead of specific details.** Use words meaningful to them (*not words like Tsunami or sniper, etc.*). Share with them that weather or geological shifting have caused a specific disastrous event in a certain part of the world or some bad people have used violence to hurt innocent people in the area. Discuss that we don't know exactly why this was happened, but a natural disaster or violence has occurred.
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 the community is focused on working to keep everyone safe in the community.
5. Parents, caregivers and teachers should **be cautious of permitting young children to watch the news** or listen to radio that is discussing or showing carnage. It is 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.
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. Elicit their feelings and concerns, and focus discussions on what they share with you. Be careful of how much media they're exposed to. Talk directly with them about the tragedy and answer 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 on the lookout for **physical symptoms of anxiety** that children may demonstrate. They may be a sign that a child, though not directly discussing the tragedy, is very troubled by the recent news events. Talk more directly to children who exhibit these signs:
 - Headaches
 - Excessive worry
 - Stomach aches
 - Increased arguing
 - Back aches
 - Irritability
 - Trouble sleeping or eating
 - Loss of concentration

- Nightmares
- Withdrawal
- Refusal to go to school
- Clinging behavior

9. Parents and caregivers should often reassure children that they will be protected and kept safe.

During tragedies like these, words expressing safety and reassurance with concrete plans should be discussed and agreed upon within the family and can provide the most comfort to children and teens.

10. If you are concerned about your children and their reaction to this or any tragedy, talk directly with their school counselor, family doctor, or local mental health professional.