

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Observing Grief

What to Say to Children about Terrorism

Something horrific has taken place that makes no sense at all. How do we possibly explain terrorist attacks to our children, when we ourselves cannot begin to comprehend it? Here are a few thoughts that may be helpful in navigating this impossible situation with children.

Answer questions based on what your children know. Your first question should be, "It's good that you came to me with this question. Can you tell me what you have heard?"

Less is more. Many children only want to know: *Am I safe? Could this happen to me?* Read between the lines of your children's questions and recognize that what they want most is reassurance. After you've offered a minimal amount of information, take note as to whether they are satisfied, for now, with what you have shared. Don't flood children with more information than they are ready to process.

Limit exposure to media. Although you may find yourself drawn to the television for news updates, children have thin filters and are easily traumatized by dramatic images and interviews. Keep young children away from broadcasts about the event. With teens who are keen to stay up to date on what's going on, sit with them to talk, answer questions, and/or join them in feeling sorrow, fear, or outrage.

Stay close. What children are most comforted by is your calm, loving presence. Cuddle, have a pillow fight, or snuggle up for some connection time. When children sense your anxiety skyrocketing, or we leave them to fend for themselves while we binge on media reports, they are left with their own scary thoughts.

Allow them to offload their worries. Children manage fears much more successfully when they do not hold them inside, where they can become magnified and distorted. Encourage your children to express their worries with you. Even if you're unable to thoroughly dismiss their concerns, simply getting their feelings out in the open and sensing your strength will offer them great comfort.

Emphasize that you and your children are safe. Now, of course we may not feel so safe in the midst of random acts of violence, but statistically speaking, we are. With younger children in particular, you will want to emphasize that the bad guys have been caught, and that there are many, many people watching out for our safety and well-being. Naturally, older teens may want to dive more deeply into the subject. Take it slowly, and emphasize again that statistically speaking, we are safe *and* it is heartbreaking that there are people in the world who are in such great despair that they resort to violence.

Model calm. I know this is easier said than done, but children look to us to determine how they should feel about something. If you are frantic or beside yourself with worry, your children cannot help but be negatively affected. Find ways to bolster your spirit, whether it's prayer, meditation, yoga, music, or time in nature to help you regain a sense of equilibrium as best you can so that you can be a calming presence for your kids.

Maintain rituals. Children are greatly comforted by moving through their days with predictability when the world outside feels so very unpredictable. Stick to routines. Maintain your typical rules and limitations. That means no three-hour marathons on video games or skipping their bath. Continuity with the world before these awful events helps children know that life goes on.

Watch for signs of anxiety or stress. These include changes in appetite, difficulty focusing on schoolwork, headaches, sleep problems, irritability, nightmares, and of course heightened anxiety. If these behaviors last for more than a week or so, and your child's teacher is seeing similar behavior in the classroom, seek help from the school counselor or outside professional support.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/susan-stiffelman/talking-with-children-and_b_8569698.html?ir=Australia



For further information please contact Patricia Thomas, Bereavement Consultant on (02) 9649 6423 or email patriciat@catholiccemeteries.com.au or visit www.catholiccemeteries.com.au



Dear Grief,
I see you. I promise to
take good care of you
and help you transform
into memories that will
bring me joy. It will
take time but we will
work this out together.
-V
#deargrief
whatsyourgrief.com



Dear Grief,
Since you are going to be around for
the rest of my life, I guess we better
become friends with each other....
-R
#deargrief
whatsyourgrief.com

***"Death does not
end our story.
Death does not
end our
relationships"***