



Advice to parents on how to support their child in the event of a critical incident

Many young people will experience a range of emotions including sadness, anger, fear, and anxiety. Families and schools can support children by establishing a sense of safety and security by maintaining normal routines, helping children to process their thoughts and feelings, and placing the event in the proper context. Additional recommendations include the following:

- Monitor social media use. Help children understand that constant use of social media can be anxiety provoking and may expose them to traumatising images.

Let's Talk

- Be attuned to children's knowledge of the event and their potential reactions. Be available to talk and listen. Let their questions be your guide on how much to focus on the tragedy. Provide facts to reduce unhelpful and inaccurate information being shared around.
- Provide accurate reassurances regarding the possibility of terrorism in their community. The odds of being the victims of such an event are very low. However, do acknowledge that their feelings are ok and normal.
- Maintain normalcy and routine whilst being flexible to children's needs. Identify vulnerable children who may need individualised support.
- Let children know it's okay to have many different feelings and there is no one right way to respond.
- Provide ways for children to express emotion, such as journaling, writing letters, talking, art, or music.
- Identify the various ways in which people are helping; emphasize the ability to do good.
- Keeping in mind that children's questions should be your guide, the following offers guidance on having developmentally appropriate conversations with children and young people:
 - **Infant children** need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that the daily structures of their lives will not change. Provide concrete examples of safety measures that are being implemented each day at home, at school, and in the community to help keep them safe.
 - **Junior children** are more likely to ask questions about whether they truly are safe. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy or false reports. For many, their perceptions of safety will be strongly influenced by social media. It is important to help them become educated consumers of the news, provide limits around the amount of time they are exposing themselves to graphic images, and encourage them to reach out to a trusted adult if they are unsure or anxious about what they are hearing.
 - **Students** may have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence and threats to safety in schools and society. Some may express anger, judge others by the actions of those they perceive as similar to the perpetrator(s), or want to retaliate. It is important for adults to help these students process their emotions and provide healthy coping strategies. Students may also share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. They will be more committed to doing something to help the victims and affected community.