

Talking to Children about Acts of Terrorism or Serious Events



Following discussions with Governors and staff a target for the school is to ensure that all children embrace British Values and that these are embedded in the celebration of a diverse society. Responses to serious news issues can concern children and can change their views about the world we live in. It is therefore important to talk to them about these issues and to re-assure them that they are safe. We will do our utmost in school but would also like to share this advice we have received with you:

Take time to listen & talk.

Children look to their parents for guidance and reassurance. Even if your children are reluctant to talk about it at first, take the lead. What you say matters. Show that it is OK to talk about difficult issues.

Review what they understand.

As your children continue to deal with terrorist episodes or serious worldwide incidents they may have misconceptions or misunderstandings about what took place, even if they have followed the news accounts. Talk about it in terms they can understand.

Identify your children's fears.

Children may have unrealistic fears that we do not anticipate. They might fear an attack on their home or loss of their parents. Take time to find out what your children are thinking about and reassure them.

Limit television exposure.

Television news presents highly disturbing images and victim accounts that can be too frightening for most children, particularly those under the age of 12. Programmes on current affairs like Newsround on CBBC are perhaps more appropriate. Newsround can be watched live or issues are covered on their website <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

Help your children express their feelings about the tragedy.

Reactions will vary from child to child depending upon a variety of factors including their personality, age, developmental level and personal history. Do remember not all children will appear to be affected by international events. Share your feelings with your children, but set a good example by expressing your feelings in an appropriate and mature manner. Extreme expressions of anger and grief may not be helpful to your child's sense of security and self-control.

Some may not want to think or talk a lot about these events. It is OK if they'd rather play ball, climb trees, or ride their bike, etc.

You won't make it worse!

Often what children need most is someone whom they trust who will listen to their questions, accept their feelings, and be there for them. Don't worry about knowing exactly the right thing to say - there is no answer that will make everything okay. Silence won't protect them from what is happening, but silence will prevent them from understanding and coping with it. Remember that listening, answering, and reassuring should be at the children's own level.

Express anger in an appropriate manner.

It is understandable that children feel angry, but the target of that anger should be the heartless people that committed the crime. **Discourage stereotypes and prejudice** which grow so easily from hate and fear. If a British citizen commits an act of terrorism, it does not represent all British citizens or if English football fans cause havoc somewhere this doesn't mean all English football fans are violent.

Spend some family time in normal, reassuring activities.

Bake a cake. Go for a walk. Play a favourite game. Do something together as a family that helps your children feel comfortable and secure.

