

HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT THE TERROR ATTACK

KidsPeace offer tips to parents, hope and help to children

NEW YORK -- To help parents and America's kids deal with children's uncertainty and fears about the terror attack, the national children's crisis charity KidsPeace has compiled tips for talking to children, and offers a website for youngsters to work through their fears.

KidsPeace's Acting President Lorrie Henderson, Ph.D., and clinical experts at more than 50 centers across the country suggest that America's parents do the following (these tips are also listed on our homepage at www.kidspeace.org):

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 schools, their friends and their communities are all focused on their safety and they will be protected by those around them. Have discussions about those dedicated to protecting us all like police, firemen, etc.
3. When discussing the events with younger children, the amount of information shared should be limited to some basic facts. Use words meaningful to them (not words like terrorist, retribution, etc.). Share with them that some bad people have used violence to hurt innocent people in the United States. Do not go into specific details.
4. School-aged children will ask, "Can bad things happen here, or to me?" Do not lie to children. Share that it is highly unlikely that anything like this will happen to them or in their community. Then reiterate how safe and protected they are by all those around them.
5. Parents, caregivers and teachers should be cautious of permitting young children to watch 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. Ongoing reassurance is critical to children.
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. Rather, elicit their feelings and concerns and focus your discussions on what they share with you. Be careful of how much media they are exposed to. Talk directly with them about the tragedy and answer their 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, although not directly discussing the tragedy, is very troubled by today's events. Talk more directly to children who exhibit these signs:
 - Headaches
 - Stomach aches
 - Back aches
 - Trouble sleeping or eating
 - Nightmares
 - Withdrawal
 - Excessive worry
 - Increased arguing
 - Irritability
 - Loss of concentration
 - Refusal to go to school
 - Clinging behavior
9. Parents and caregivers should often reassure children that they are loved. During tragedies like these, words expressing love combined with deeds demonstrating love (for example, walks in the park or attending a community sporting event) can provide the most comfort to children and teens.
10. FOR KIDS: If you are concerned about your children and their reaction to this or any tragedy, talk directly with their school counselor, family doctor, or have your older children visit KidsPeace's teen-help website, www.TeenCentral.net , which provides anonymous and clinically-screened help and resources for teen problems before they become overwhelming.

KidsPeace is a 124-year-old charity dedicated to giving hope, help and healing to thousands of children daily facing crises, including traumas, depression, and the stresses of modern life. For more information, visit www.kidspeace.org . Older children and teens can find help at www.TeenCentral.net .

EXPERTS AVAILABLE: National children's experts are available for interview by calling Mark Stubis, Vice President of Communications, at (800) 25-PEACE.