



# Let's Talk About it

## Quick Tips for Parents

### *Families Can Help Children cope with Fear and Anxiety*

Everyone reacts differently to tragic events. Whether tragic events touch your family personally or are brought into your home via newspapers and television, you can help children cope with the anxiety that violence and disasters can cause.

Listening and talking to children about their concerns can reassure them that they will be safe. Start by encouraging them to discuss how they have been affected by what is happening around them. Even young children may have specific questions about tragedies. Children react to stress at their own developmental level

The Federal Center for Mental Health Services offers these additional pointers for parents and other caregivers:

- **Encourage children to ask questions:** Listen to what they say. Provide comfort and assurance that addresses their specific fears. It is OK to admit you can't answer their questions.
- **Talk on their level:** Communicate with your children in a way that they can understand.
- **Be Honest:** Tell them exactly what has happened. For example, do not say that someone that someone that has died that they "went to sleep". Children will then be afraid to go to bed.
- **Find out what frightens them:** Encourage your children to talk about other fears that may have.
- **Focus on the positive.** Reinforce the fact that most people are kind and caring.
- **Pay attention:** Your children's play and drawings may give you a glimpse into their questions or concerns
- **Develop a plan:** establish a family emergency plan for the future, such as a meeting place where everyone should gather if something unexpected happens in your family or neighborhood.

(Source: Center for Mental Health Services, US Department of Health and Human Services)

For More Information

Call the Ben Gordon Center at 815-756-4875

Or on the web at [www.bengordoncenter.org](http://www.bengordoncenter.org)

24 hour Crisis Hotline: 1-866-BGC-0111



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