



# Lets Talk About it

## Quick Tips for Parents

### Talking to your children about Tragedy: School Age Children

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- Children need comforting and frequent reassurance that they're safe make sure they get it.
- Be honest and open about the disaster.
- Encourage children to express their feelings through talking, drawing or playing.
- Try to maintain your daily routines as much as possible.

Children this age may ask many questions about the event, and it's important that you try to answer them in clear and simple language. Answer only the question that they ask. Children this age can sense you're distressed; try not to tell a child not to worry--doing so will just make him or her worry more.

Here are several important things to remember with school-age children:



- Do not offer false reassurance. If you say event will never affect your family again; children will know this isn't true. Instead, say, "You're safe now and I'll always try to protect you, -- or--Adults are working very hard to make things safe." Children's fears often get worse around bedtime, so you might want to restructure bedtime routines and rituals such as reading them a story or sticking around until the child falls asleep in order to make him or her feel protected.
- Monitor children's television viewing. As with adults, images of the disaster and the damage are extremely frightening to children, so limit the amount of media coverage they see. A good way to do this without calling attention to your own concern is to regularly schedule an activity--story reading, drawing, movies, or letter writing, for example--during news shows.

Children express themselves through play or drawing. School age children still find comfort in expressing themselves through playing, games or drawing. Allow them to do so. Parents should participate in the play. If the child illustrates drawings of the disaster or their fears, then talk about it, this gives you as the parent an opportunity "re-tell" the ending of the game or the story they have expressed in pictures with an emphasis on personal safety.

•Be honest, don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Part of keeping discussions with your children about this or any other information is the ability to be open and honest. Parents should not feel embarrassed in saying they don't know how to answer a child's question. When this occurs, explain to your child that disasters are extremely rare, and they cause feelings that even adults have trouble dealing with. Temper this by explaining that, even so, adults will always work very hard to keep children safe and secure.



For More Information

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