

# What Do We Say To Children about the Sniper?

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☆ **First, we don't say, we ask to find out where the child is:**

*What have you heard? Where did you hear that?*

*What do you think? Have any of your friends talked about it?*

☆ **Second, how we respond depends on the child's age and experience.**

**To the young child we give concrete answers:**

*Yes, the sniper is a very bad person.*

*I think you are safe.*

*I'm glad the police are working so hard to catch the sniper. I think they will, very soon.*

**To the child who just immigrated from a war torn country:**

*Does this seem the same as before we came here? I think it is very different. There is only one or possibly two people, and the police will catch them.*

**To the child who lives in a part of a city where shootings and murders are common:**

*The child may ask why the big fuss about one shooter when it happens on his block every week. This is different. It is just one or two people, and the way they are doing it makes it very hard for the police to catch them. They want money, lots of money.*

**To the young child who lives in a safe area and has no experience with shootings:**

*I think you are safe. Is there anything I can do to help you feel safe?*

**To any child who is older and willing to think and talk:**

*There are parts of the world where this is commonplace. Get the map and let's look at where those places are.*

**If you live in the affected area:**

*What can I do to help you?*

*Here are some things that the police, your school, (etc.) are doing to keep us safe.*

**If the child lives in a safe area:**

*What do you think the adults should be doing to help the children in the Washington DC area?*

*Is there something we can do?*

*Shall we send a thank you message to some of the police who must be working long, long hours?*

☆ **Most important of all: Do your own work first.**

Get into your adult calm space. If this brings up old fears for you, tell the children:

*This reminds me of the time when... happened, and I am feeling my old scare. I'll get some comfort about that; you don't have to take care of it. But I wanted you to know, because I may be more jumpy right now. This is a good time for me to think about that old scare and get over it.*

\*Jean Illsley Clarke is a member of Family Information Services' National Panel of Advisors.



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