



How to Talk to Your Children About Terrorist Attacks on the U.S.

Although the initial shock has passed, we anticipate ongoing news coverage and photos of the tragedy to continue over the next weeks and months.

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York and on the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., where many people were killed or seriously injured, may challenge your child's sense of basic trust and safety. Children are concerned about their own safety and relate to those who were killed or injured while in a daycare setting. Consider these guidelines for talking with your children about this tragedy.

- ◆ Understand that reactions will vary depending on the age of the child. Young children in daycare settings may react with separation anxiety, and all ages may have concerns about their own safety.
 - ◆ Don't allow your children to watch news coverage for extended lengths of time. Ask them what they have seen and heard and talk about it with them. Be sensitive to photos in magazines and newspapers with which children might identify.
 - ◆ Emphasize to them that it happened far away from your state/town (if this is true). Tell them how long a drive it would take to get to where the attacks occurred. Stress that the attacks occurred for political reasons; it was not an attack on children.
 - ◆ Encourage them to talk about how they feel by expressing your own feelings of sadness about adults and children being killed. Talking things through helps to give them a sense of control over their own life.
 - ◆ Be available to your children over time. Children express themselves in bits and snatches, not all at once, and often will revisit the issue many times before they reach closure.
- ◆ Reassure them that they are the most precious things in your life and you will take every precaution to keep them safe. Explain that experts are studying this tragedy to understand how and why it happened in order to prevent it from happening again.
 - ◆ Protect them from exposure to other violent situations (such as violent TV shows) and stressors that might cause them to feel unsafe or insecure.
 - ◆ Children who are experiencing recent trauma or major changes in their life such as a death of a friend or family member, divorce or separation of parents, or a relocation, may be more affected. Provide extra nurturing and spend some extra time with them to help them feel safe and cared for. Let them know their feelings are normal.

*Source: Parent Warmline, Children's Health Care-Minneapolis for **Family Information Services**, Minneapolis, MN. Phone: (800) 852-8112 or website: www.familyinfoserv.com*