



Talking with Your Child About Current Events



allegheny
children's initiative

Hope starts here

Tips for Parents

1. What Does Your Child Know?

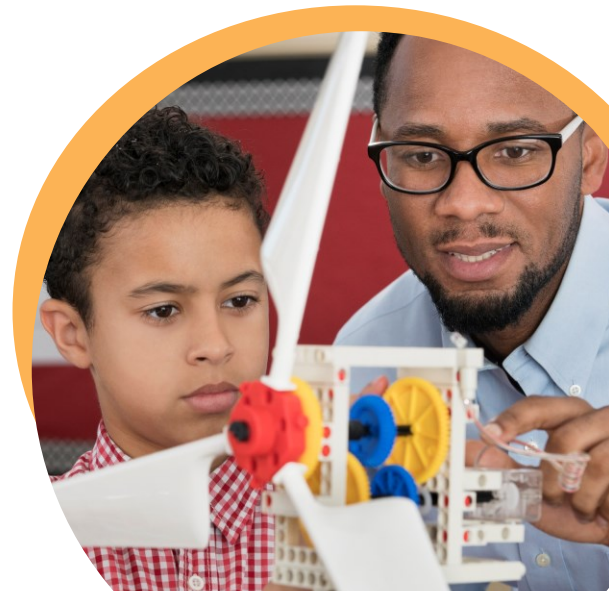
Ask questions to find out if your child already knows about the event. Encourage them to talk since it can help them to share their fears with you. Don't push it if they seem uninterested in talking about the event—they're not ready. If they are already asking you questions about it, then they are ready to talk. So, what do you do now?

2. Answer Questions Briefly and Honestly

Giving your child just the information they need to know, no more and no less, helps lower their anxiety. Being honest is also important because your child is probably highly in tune with you and can sense a lie, which will increase their worry. Next, listen carefully to your child's questions. Let their questions be your guide.

Depending on your child's age, their questions may be fantastical; however, older children (about 7 and up) tend to understand that the news is real and therefore older children may have lots of questions. If you don't have an answer to a question, it's OK to say so and then make time to search for answers together on the web (using age-appropriate web sites, of course. No gory pictures here!).

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Maintaining a normal routine reduces anxiety in children and adults. This looks like sticking to regular day-to-day schedules, like going to school on time, eating meals at a usual time each day and not slacking on homework when possible.



3. Help Your Child Feel in Control

Teaching your child to be prepared can help them feel more in control, particularly if they are scared the event being discussed can happen to them (ex. Contagious illness, school shooting, natural disaster, etc.).

Review safety procedures with them. Feeling prepared will reinforce any reassurances offered to your child.

Talk to your child about what they can do to help others. For example, if they are worried about school shootings, can they write a letter to their government representative asking for support in reducing gun violence? Identifying ways to be a helper is a powerful tool against anxiety caused by current events.

More Tips!

- Before talking to your child about a current event, check in with yourself. Think about what you know and how you feel about it. Doing this ahead of talking to your child, can help you to manage your own emotions in front of your child.
- Your emotions and your child's emotions are normal. Let them know this instead of rushing to reassure them with comments such as, "Don't be afraid!" Being scared is normal and there are ways to cope with fear.
- Model coping and routine for your child. When they see you taking care of yourself, they will be more likely to do it themselves. Color, play music, write—whatever works!

Finally: Be Observant

Not all children are willing to talk about something that is worrying them. That's OK. Look for hints. Is your child normally a good sleeper and suddenly not? Is your child crying more than usual? Isolating more?

Remember, children with mental health difficulties may experience more severe reactions than others. In that case...

Call your provider(s)

Allegheny Children's Initiative is here to support you and can help in facilitating your conversation with your child.

Provider Name(s): _____

Phone number(s): _____

The following resources helped create this flier and can help you, too. Thank you!

[Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers \(nasponline.org\)](https://www.nasponline.org)

[How to Talk to Your Child About the News \(for Parents\) - Nemours KidsHealth](https://www.nemourskidshealth.org)

[Talking to Kids About Current Events - On Our Sleeves](https://www.alleghenychildrens.org)