

Ten Top Tips



When supporting children affected by the news

It can be difficult to shield children from the news at times as they may be exposed to it on various platforms, overhear conversations between adults or discuss it with their friends. This can cause children to feel scared and worried. Here are some tips on how to support children upset by troubling local, national and world events.

- 1. Check for your own worries.** Take a quick pause and acknowledge your own feelings. This helps to engage your 'thinking brain' which is important because your worried child will be driven by their 'emotional brain'. Engaging your 'thinking brain' means you will be better equipped to respond to your child with reason and empathy. Self-awareness and self-regulation are critical to supporting a child who is distressed.
- 2. Connect!** Making the effort to connect helps children know they're valued and builds their sense of security. Make time to talk, listen and play without distractions. Be sure children know they are loved unconditionally.
- 3. Be aware of changes in your child's behavior.** Reactions to being exposed to troubling news events may result in changes to children's play, conversations, their sleeping and eating patterns or they may also find it difficult to regulate their emotions.
- 4. See the world through their eyes.** We see and interact with the world based on our own standards, beliefs, and values. This is also true with children. When parents take time to consider what is most important to children – from their perspective – it helps them to gain insight into their child's fears, insecurities and worries. Stepping into your child's world helps them to feel heard and understood.
- 5. Name and acknowledge feelings.** Help your child to name and acknowledge their feelings. If your child struggles to do this it's a sign they need support to build skills and resources in this area. Remind them that it is okay to feel what they are feeling. Reassure your child many times that you are there for them no matter what.
- 6. Maintain a routine.** Routines are a powerful nonverbal signal to children's brains that they are safe, and that life is predictable. Create a weekly calendar with your child to remind them when learning, playing, sleeping, and eating activities occur. Establishing a comforting bedtime routine (reading, singing songs, telling stories, talking) is particularly important because it will help to calm your child before bed and ensure a good night's sleep.
- 7. Limit news access.** Watching the news can be distressing for children. It's a good idea to switch it off in the home and car when your child is around if possible. Also make sure you have age-appropriate parental controls installed on any device your child has access to.
- 8. Support your child to help others.** Complex world events and issues can feel overwhelming to children. Supporting kids to find ways they can help reduces their sense of powerlessness. From donating a toy to fundraising with classmates, there are many ways that children can help. Brainstorm ideas with your children and assist them to plan and implement their ideas.
- 9. Prioritise self-care.** You are better able to support your child when you are healthy and happy. When you take care of yourself you are setting a good example for your child by modelling that self-care is important. Demonstrate how to focus on what you can control, not what you can't.
- 10. Seek further help.** While most children will bounce back after feeling distressed, some children may show prolonged distress and could benefit from professional assistance. Children are at increased risk of developing more lasting problems if they have been directly impacted by the event or if they link a news event with a previous traumatic experience.

