

## Support for Speaking with Children & Youth About Traumatic Events in the Media

It's common to wonder what to do or say when trying to comfort a child or teenager who may have difficult questions about traumatic events in the news that they might be hearing about online and through social and traditional media. Regardless of age, scary or upsetting news can affect them emotionally with feelings of worry, fear, anger or even guilt.

**Most importantly, you can be there for them as they process the information, reassure them they are safe, and respond truthfully when they ask questions.**

### Things to Keep in Mind

- **Offer your genuine support.** If you don't know an answer, don't be afraid to say so. Being near can be comforting, even if you don't know what to say.
- **Listen when they want to talk.** Tell them that you're there to answer questions, hear their worries and accept whatever feelings they express.
- **Stress that their family is safe.** Without discounting their feelings of concern, reassure them by explaining what protections keep them safe. For example, if the news event occurred far away, the distance can be comforting. If it was nearer to home, sharing age-appropriate tips for staying and feeling safe can be reassuring.
- **Know when to tune out.** Be aware of the potential impact of media overload from social and traditional media, as well as other online sources. Talk to your children about the importance of limiting their exposure to upsetting coverage.
- **Monitor your own emotional state.** Recognizing your own feelings enables you to be more supportive and gives children a model to express their feelings. If you're feeling overwhelmed with your own emotions, it may not be the time to provide comfort. Take care of you, too.
- **Ask for help if you need it.** If you want assistance supporting the emotional needs of your child or if you're worried about their level of distress, reach out to a professional for support.

**If you need further assistance supporting your child, please contact your school counsellor or Principal. There are also resources for online and in-person counselling in the community – for easy reference, a list can be found on the District's website [here](#).**