

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT TRAUMATIC EVENTS

T

TALK! START THE CONVERSATION

- Don't leave it to your child to bring up the subject
- Staying silent and trying to shield children may make it more difficult for them as they are likely to hear from others or sense something is wrong

A

ASK & ENCOURAGE QUESTIONS

- Ask what your child knows or has heard
- Keep the lines of communication open--encourage them to ask whatever questions they might have and assure them you will do the best you can to answer

L

LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE

- Keep media exposure age-appropriate and don't let it play on repeat
- Understand that the news is often not child-friendly and that repeated exposure to traumatic images can increase stress

K

KNOW & SHARE THE FACTS

- Share basic factual information
- Correct inaccuracies in your child's understanding
- Acknowledge what you don't know

S

SEE THE GOOD

- "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' ~Fred Rogers

C

CARE FOR YOURSELF

- Focus on self-care; as a parent you are also dealing with the trauma and fear. In order to take care of your child properly, you must first take care of yourself
- Model regulating your emotions and coping with anxiety

A

ACKNOWLEDGE THE "WHY"

- Children will likely have questions about why people do bad things; help them understand that sometimes people make egregious choices in response to big emotions
- Remind them that there are no bad emotions, but that does not justify bad behavior

R

REASSURE

- Reassure and affirm that your child is safe
- Remind them that your job is to protect them and that you will do that

E

EMPATHIZE & EMOTION COACH

- Validate and normalize your child's feelings; do not mock, shame, or tell them to "get over it"
- Focus on connecting and listening
- Help them name the emotion--"Name it to Tame it"

D

DON'T PARENT ALONE

- We were never meant to parent alone
- If your child's emotions seem more significant than you might expect, consider enlisting therapeutic support
- Parent coaching and communities can provide much needed support for *you* as you work to support your child

