

Telling kids about tragedy

Talking to kids about scary events and disasters is important when they're old enough to understand. Kids may have more fear of an event if they don't know any details. They may imagine something much worse than what happened.

Although telling kids some details may help, the American Academy of Pediatrics says it's important that you filter the information you give your child. Think about the child's age, personality and what they will be able to cope with. These steps can get the conversation started:

- **Ask the child what they know about the event.** This can help you separate facts from fiction. It gives you a way to explain the things they already know in a way that is direct but not scary.
- **Avoid any graphic details.** Although the media may share lots of details that are graphic and scary, children should be shielded from these things.
- **Don't be too vague.** Saying "something happened that was bad" doesn't give enough information. Instead, name the place where it happened and tell them that some people were hurt. The police/ firemen/ government, etc. are helping people and working to keep us safe.
- **Keep it open ended.** Tell them if they have any questions, they can ask you.



Is your child coping?

After a disaster, some children have a hard time coping. These red flags may be a sign that your child needs help:

- Trouble sleeping, nightmares or being very tired all the time
- Unusual aches and pains, such as headache or feeling "sick" often
- Appetite changes
- Social changes, such as aggression or being clingy
- Frequent feelings of sadness or fear

Talk to your child's doctor if you notice any of these changes.

