



Responding to frightening events

Events in the news can cause parents, school staff and children to worry about themselves and others and can lead to adults feeling unsure as to what information they should give to children. Frightening events can make us feel uncertain and worried and, to a child, the world can now feel like a very unsafe place where the natural order of things is completely disrupted. Sometimes adults try to protect children and young people by avoiding talking about the event. They worry about upsetting them or making things worse. Some people hope that by not talking about it, children and young people will forget all about the event. However, children and young people are likely to benefit from talking about what has happened, but they may need adult help to do this.

Here are some practical things you can do to support children and young people when there are worrying events happening in the world that they may hear about:

- Sticking to their normal routines and activities as much as possible is reassuring and helps children to feel safe and makes events feel predictable
- Try to manage your own anxiety so that you can provide calm reassurance to the child about their own safety
- Give them the opportunity to talk about events and to ask questions without forcing them to talk
- Answer their questions openly and honestly using language appropriate to their level of understanding
- Try to answer only the question asked and avoid giving extra detail. There is a fine line between being honest and overloading a child with information they do not want. Try to give just enough information to enable the child to start to put together a story that makes some sense to them
- Children may also start to worry about themselves or

others close to them being hurt. Although you cannot offer definite reassurance that this will not happen, it can be helpful to say something like 'There are some very bad people in this world but not many - most are good and kind'. This might help redress the balance. Being heavy users of social media, adolescents and teenagers are more aware of the realities of life, and much of what they hear about is skewed towards the bad. A death by murder or manslaughter reinforces the feeling that the world is a scary and dangerous place

Look on the website www.childbereavementuk.org For families section to find the Information Sheet: After the event – supporting children after a frightening event

World events

Schools need to be aware that if a large scale disaster has happened in a particular area/country, and is shown in the news/media, there may be repercussions within the school, depending on the backgrounds and cultures of the individuals in the school.

Anxieties within the school may need to be reduced, and, dependent on the school/age and situation, there may need to be an assembly or form time discussion. Setting aside an area where pupils can come to have a chat with a member of staff if they are worried or anxious may also be useful. Pupils may have some ties to the event, or a memory may be triggered of a traumatic event or of the death of a significant person in their own lives.

TV deaths and deaths of celebrities

TV programmes can have a big impact on pupils' feelings and understanding of the world around them. Different programmes have various story lines of disasters and death, and being aware that these may trigger a reaction in some pupils, due to the nature of the situation, should be taken into consideration. Pupils may form close attachments to celebrities. The death of someone well known and the subsequent media response may need to be considered. Some acknowledgement of the event, and possibly a quiet space or time out, may be needed throughout the day.