



Talking with Your Kids about the World Trade Center Tragedy

We are all coping with a very horrible tragedy. We believe that all parents, including foster parents, need to feel supported by each other. Then, with this support, we are able to **help our children in coping** with their feelings, reactions, and questions.

Here are some suggestions that have helped us, and that you may find useful:

Children, adolescents, parents, foster parents and staff have strong emotions about this tragedy; however they may be quite different depending on our own personal histories. It is natural and helpful to share your feelings with your child. But, remember that, **as an adult, you could overwhelm your child with your feelings. Our job is to care for our children.**

If you feel that you are not handling this well or are overwhelmed by fears, talk to a Children's Aid Society staff member before sharing these feelings with your child. The important thing is for you to **comfort and reassure your child**. It is not helpful to place your child in a situation where he or she feels the need to comfort you.

Your child or adolescent needs you to provide emotional support:

- **Take time to listen to their questions and feelings** but respect their preferences as to when (and if) they want to talk about it.
- **Reassure them that they are physically safe** and that the important adults in their lives, including teachers, police, and you, are protecting them.
- Children may have many questions about the tragedy. **Try to answer their questions honestly, but always in a way that will be helpful to them.** Some questions are very difficult or complicated to answer. It's OK to tell your child that you don't know the answer. Behind many of the questions is a need to know they are protected and safe.
- Many children are reassured at these times by **frequent physical contact** and may want to be physically near you more than usual, and even a bit clingy for a while. **Hug your child often.**
- Some children may be particularly frightened at bedtime. Extra reassurance and spending some **extra time together at bedtime** can be helpful. For some children, the option of keeping a light or night-light on may be helpful. A few children may have trouble falling asleep or have scary dreams or nightmares. Give them permission to wake you up if they need to.
- Repeated viewing of the tragedy on TV can make coping even more difficult. As terrible as this tragedy was, it happened only once, not again and again. It will help your child to **limit repeated exposure to the tragedy on TV.**
- It is usually important for the entire family to **continue on with your normal daily routines** to show that the family has come through this experience intact and that the world is again predictable.

If you believe your child is having an excessive reaction, remains constantly upset for more than a week or two, or you are unable to reassure them, **your child may need additional help.**

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