

From Fear to Hope:

Helping children cope with war, terrorism,
and other acts of violence

for parents and caregivers

We all have fears as we try to process the violence of war and terrorism that we hear and see every day in the news. Many families have been personally affected by incidents of hate speech, lockdowns of our schools, bullying/cyber-bullying, shootings in our neighborhoods, and the list continues.

- How do we find hope in our own lives?
- How do we share hope with our children?
- How can we help build understanding and healing for our children?

Ways to support and comfort your children:

1. Listen to your children and acknowledge their strong feelings of sadness, anger, guilt, fear. Help them find their own words for their feelings. You can share that you have some of those same feelings without projecting your own fears on them. Reassure your children that the bad events that happened are not their fault.
2. Understand children's fears of being left alone or separated from their families, death of themselves or family members, and/or the reoccurrence of the incidence of violence.
3. Be aware of the messages your children are picking up from media coverage, including news, commercials, and social media. Turn off the news. The repetition of these messages can be quite harmful to children. As children ask questions, share simple, factual information.
4. Provide creative play materials that allow your children to express their feelings, stories, and ideas, such as play dough, blocks, art materials, multicultural dolls and puppets. Listen to your children when they share in conversation and play.



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5. Parents, talk with children about your deepest family values. Share your faith perspective on hope in difficult times. Be open in sharing about death and grieving. Light a candle, plant flowers or a tree, or think of another way for your family to express hope in this time of sorrow.
6. Model kind and respectful behavior towards those who are different than yourself, as well as self-care and respect for your own needs. Respond to biased remarks and actions.
7. Tell inspiring family stories and stories of heroes who have made a difference to you or your community. Be aware of your own assumptions and attitudes and how they may affect the conversations you have with your children as well as others in your family and community.
8. Reach out to someone in your community who is different than you. Smile, talk, invite them over for a meal, playtime, or a fun snack.
9. Watch for physical and emotional signs of overwhelming stress in yourself or your children. If you need help, reach out to your family doctor, your faith leader/teacher, a counselor, or a crisis hotline.
10. Read and discuss books with your children. A helpful picture book dealing with grief is:
 - ***Tear Soup: A Recipe for Healing After Loss*** by Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKlyen. This story acknowledges deep feelings of loss and grief.



**May you and your children feel support and healing
as you cope with these difficult times.**

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