

Discussing Current Events with Young Children

We have 24-hour access to news stories. TVs and other social media devices constantly flash pictures and scenes of world events. We discuss these current events as we see them unfold. But we are not the only ones who see and hear the news.

Parents find it a difficult task to shield children from news stories. Today's media exposes kids to news. It can include positive and uplifting stories. However, much of the news contains violence. It is an accepted practice for news stations to show violent acts over and over.

Current event reporting offers parents a chance to teach - and children to learn. However, parents must first make a decision about the news items they wish their child to see and hear.

Pre-school children have a limited ability to separate fantasy from reality. They are unable to make sense of news events. Experts tell parents that **young children should not be exposed to violence** as seen on the news and other media. It scares the child. Constant exposure may desensitize them to violent acts.

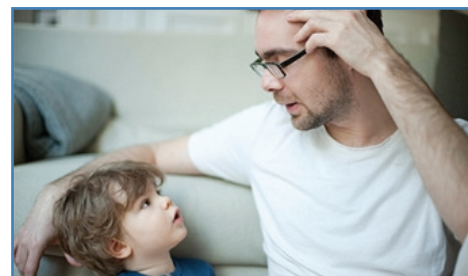
What can you do when your young child sees and hears disturbing news?

- **Find out what your child actually knows and thinks.** Ask a few questions. She might just be curious about what she saw -- but not really interested.

- **Explain, in simple terms, what your child saw.** Skip details. Young kids do not need the *whole* story.
- **Discuss your child's feelings.** If she is scared, do not make her feel bad. Tell her that feelings are normal – that you want to know how she feels.
- **Reassure your child that she is safe.** Kids want and need to feel safe and secure.
- **Share examples of positive outcomes that often accompany tragedy.** For example, discuss volunteers who help people after the event.
- **Express empathy.** You want your child to learn compassion for others.

Make TV time positive and fun.

Choose programs with care. Change the channel or pick a new activity to avoid violence and tragic news. Instead, watch news events like the Olympics, holiday celebrations in other countries, concerts.



Brought to you by Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital to help keep kids safe, healthy and happy.



Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.

1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889
10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week
www.parenthelpline.org

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