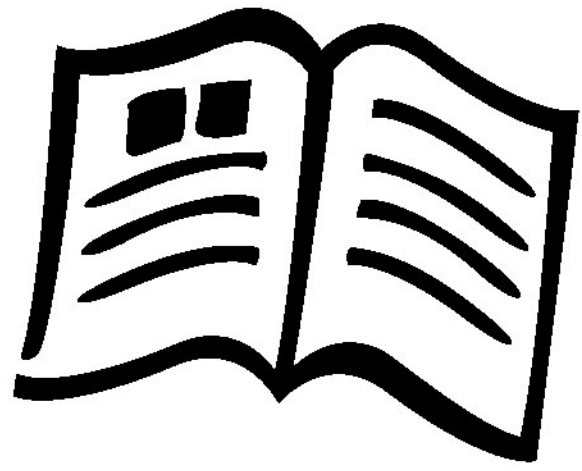


How to talk to kids about...

SCARY NEWS



At times news and current events can feel confusing, scary and difficult to comprehend at any age. So how do we begin to explain it to kids?

Our child experts weigh in..



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1. It's not **just** about news

Save the Children's Principal Advisor for Child Protection, Karen Flanagan starts by reminding adults that it's not just about protecting children from watching or reading the news.

“Children see and hear news from a range of different sources [including social media, classmates and friends].”



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2. It's about protection and support

Karen suggests considering the time and place to broach any distressing subjects brought up in the news.

Her tips include:

- Talking about it at home where kids already feel safe
- Avoiding talking last thing at night
- Ensuring you have time for any questions that might come up, or in-depth conversations that might be prompted



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3. Consider your own reaction

Keep in mind scary news can be unsettling at any age. Take time to process the news and make sure you are okay before checking in with kids.

It is also worth taking the time to reflect on your reaction and any beliefs or bias so you can approach the topic in a calm and rational manner.

“Your children will look to the way you handle news to determine their own approach,”



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4. Let kids be the guide

Kid's responses to news vary greatly. Some are hungry for answers while others may find information overwhelming.

“When a child first approaches you, they’ve already picked up the information from another source ... it’s usually from school friends (who can exaggerate) or from online,” says Karen.

“Sometimes they won’t ask you anything at all. If you’ve picked up that they’re abnormally quiet, then you need to generate the conversation.”



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5. You don't need to know all the answers

As adults, we often feel we need to show we are in control by having all the answers.

Karen reminds us that parents and caregivers it's okay not to know it all. If a child asks a question you don't know the answer to it's okay to admit you don't and instead suggest you explore the topic together.



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6. Honesty is the best policy

Regardless of how distressing the news might be, it's best they hear the truth from the people they most trust.

“Don't be flippant or minimise the issue, as they may perceive you are negating their concerns and may not ask you again,” Karen advises.

“You must be your child's honest, reliable source of information. If you turn out to be an unreliable source (or you try to shield them from bad news), they'll just go elsewhere ”



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7. Reassure them they are safe

While parents and caregivers may not have the power to stop distressing events, adults do have the power to help kids feel safe.

“When kids know the adults in their life love them and can protect them it’s called ‘psychological safety,’” says Karen.

“It’s when they feel safe – truly, psychologically safe – that they can get on with life.”



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Thanks for talking to kids about scary news

With social media feeds and the 24-hr news cycle, it's inevitable kids will come across scary news.

But if kids understand they have adults they can turn to if it gets too distressing or confusing, they're more likely to find the resilience to bounce back.

Keen to learn more? Read our blog:
[savethechildren.org.au/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-scary-news](https://www.savethechildren.org.au/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-scary-news)



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