

How to talk to your child after a tragedy occurs

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** ([AAP](#)) encourages parents, teachers, childcare providers, and others who work closely with children and teens to filter information about tragic events and to present in a way that allows for **understanding**, **adjusting** and **coping** with tragedy.

Pre-School-age Children (4 or younger):

- **Do not bring the incident up**, unless your child does
- **Reassure the child** that they are safe
- **Do not watch the news** in front of your child

Elementary School-age Children (5-12):

- **Appropriate to bring up tragic incident(s) and say:**
“ You know this terrible thing happened, where some kids/people were hurt/killed by somebody. ”
- **Gauge your child’s reaction** to see if they want to discuss any further.
- **Reassure them that they are safe**—let them know that you, their teachers, and their school are doing everything they can to keep them safe; something like this won’t happen to them.
- **Acknowledge you’re not sure why things like this happen**—let them know you do everything to protect them at home and in this world.



Middle School Children & High School Teens (12-17):

- **Start by asking your child what they’ve heard about an incident, their reactions, and feelings about what occurred** (try to gauge what your child is feeling and if they want to talk more about it).
- **Reassure them that they are safe**—let them know that you, their teachers, and their school are doing everything they can to keep them safe so that something like this won’t happen to them.
- **Acknowledge you’re not sure why things like this happen**—let them know you do everything to protect them at home and in this world.
- **Let your teen know the firearm laws in WA State are more strict**—to try to prevent firearms getting in the hands of those who want to harm themselves or other.
- **Do not push information on them, check-in with your child** to see how they are doing in the days to come.





Do you need immediate assistance?

CALL 9-1-1*

(*9-8-8 available July 16, 2022)

Three Interventions Toolkit >> **FREE Digital Toolkit** featuring three interventions addressing firearm injury and death:
hiprc.org/3interventionstoolkit

1 >> **Firearm Life Plan**
firearmlifeplan.org

Developed by the University of Colorado to help people think about important questions related to firearms and to protect their families from the burden of making difficult decisions without guidance.

2 >> **Forefront Suicide Prevention LEARN®**
inthe forefront.org

Provides steps to take to immediately make your home and community safer, and guidance on what to do if you're faced with supporting someone who may be considering suicide. *Includes webinars, videos, trainings, and other resources.*

3 >> **Washington Safe Storage Map**
hiprc.org/firearm/firearm-storage-wa

An interactive map designed to help people in crisis identify local options for temporary, voluntary firearm storage outside of their homes.

Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO)
protectionorder.org

WA State residents are encouraged to petition for an **Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO)** when an individual's behavior indicates substantial risk of suicide or harm to self or others.

Helping Children Cope and Adjust After a Disaster
aap.org

The **American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)** provides resources to help pediatricians, and all adults in a position to support children, after disasters and other crisis events that have the potential to cause short- and long-term effects on the psychological functioning, emotional adjustment, health and developmental trajectory of children.

Catastrophic Mass Violence Resources
nctsn.org

The **National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)** provides resources to help families and children who may be profoundly affected by mass violence, acts of terrorism, or community trauma in the form of shootings, bombings, or other types of attacks.

