

How do I Talk to my Children about Distressing News Stories?

- Talking with your children about world events is important and necessary
- Be age / understanding appropriate
- Be careful about the news sources they access so that they get facts rather than sensationalism or speculation
- Try to answer questions as they arise rather than being tempted to give large amounts of unrequested information
- Be prepared to have to repeat yourself, especially with younger children who might take longer to process / understand the information – they might ask the same questions at a later date, and it does not necessarily mean they have been pre-occupied all that time so don't worry
- Make time to answer questions later if 'now' is not the right time
- Trying to 'shield' children is tempting but impossible in today's information saturated society – but there is no need to be needlessly graphic
- Try to be the person that breaks the news, rather than a classmate or friend – someone will tell them, it is inevitable – and they might not be as sensitive about it as you would like them to be
- Imagination is a powerful tool and will fill in any gaps you haven't addressed

- Let them know that you will always try and keep them safe
- Try to emphasise that these events are the exception rather than the rule – they happen rarely but sadly they do occur
- We need to look out for each other but try not to be afraid, as, again, such things are unlikely
- Admit to your own worries but balance that with probability
- Show emotion but not hysteria
- Try to be as unbiased as you can – there are many different views in the world and most do not lead to terrorism; learning new perspectives and thinking for themselves is important
- Focus also on the safety of our environment where possible – for instance we do not have earthquakes of great magnitude in the UK
- Try to emphasise that just because someone does a bad thing it does not necessarily make them a bad person
- It is okay to admit to not knowing something – for instance why someone acted in a certain way
- People are always going to disagree about the bigger issues in life – but there are better ways to solve issues than resorting to violence
- No one knows your child(ren) better than you and each child may need a different approach – again, be age appropriate but factual
- Don't shut down the dialogue – let them feel they can talk to you about anything. It is easier to talk than try and protect children from difficult news