

# Talking to Kids About **TRAUMATIC EVENTS**

*Every day, horrific events happen. Sometimes they unfold in our neighborhood and sometimes we learn about national and global tragedies from television news.*

*Just as adults are often stunned by violence and tragedy, so are our children who may overhear adult conversations, see news programs or hear about high profile events from their peers.*

*The younger the child, the more confusing this information can seem. A child may feel an array of emotions, even if a traumatic event is not directly connected to their lives.*

*Talking about it can make all the difference in how your child responds to bad news.*

*Here are four winning ways to discuss traumatic events:*

- **Start a conversation.** Just because a child hasn't said anything about a tragedy doesn't mean that he or she hasn't noticed. A child may be too overwhelmed with feelings to know what to say. If you get a sense that your child is thinking about the event or if he or she asks questions, it is time to talk. Silence is not the answer.
- **Make your child feel secure.** Reassure your son or daughter that you will keep him or her safe. Let your child know it's OK to feel scared or upset or angry about what has happened. Talk about how those feelings make us human.
- **Learn what your child knows.** Be a careful listener. Your child may have heard inaccurate information or misunderstood what they saw or heard. This is an opportunity to provide correct information that is age-appropriate.
- **Try non-verbal expressions.** Encourage your child to express their feelings with a drawing, a poem, song or any other creative outlet. For some children this may be easier than talking. You may also discover your child wants to do something to make a difference. Brainstorm on how best to do that.

**Tragedies happen. Help your child cope with feelings associated with bad news and bounce back.**