



## Media coverage and children

Children who repeatedly see or hear continuous media coverage about the current pandemic, may develop continued fears about their own safety and that of their family. They may think violence and crime are widespread and perceive the world to be more dangerous than it actually is. Children who have lost a pet, experienced a separation or divorce, or lost a friend or relative may be deeply affected. You can protect and support your child by doing the following:

- **Limit exposure to news coverage of disturbing events.** Closely monitor what your child is seeing on TV and online. If your child has a mobile phone, set clear boundaries for how the phone should be used.
- **Explain the media events in developmentally-appropriate ways.** Talk with your children in ways they can readily understand. Keep your explanations of events brief and factual, and let your child take the lead in voicing their concerns or questions. Very young children, in particular, should be shielded from watching media coverage of violent events.
- **Be present if your child does watch TV coverage of disturbing events.** That way, you can answer your child's questions and talk about concerns—or correct your child if they misunderstand what they're seeing. You don't have to have all the answers, but your reassurance is most important. You might say something like, "Bad things do happen, but most people are good and care about the same things we do in our family." It is important to be present even if your child is a teenager. If your child does not respond to your questions, let them know you are always available to talk if they have concerns or worries.

**Take extra steps if the coverage involves a crime or other frightening event in your community.** Find out what your child knows or has heard from friends so you can correct any mistaken ideas that they may have picked up.

**Monitor the play of young children.** Children will often express in play what they can't say in words. Use play and make-believe as opportunities to engage with your child, provide reassurance, and correct any misinformation or mistaken beliefs.

**Keep to family routines.** Routines help children feel secure and let them know your family is OK and operating as normal. Plan an activity that your child enjoys - cooking, painting, reading together are all good options.

**Try, as much as possible,** to spend extra time with your child during difficult times.

**Assure your children that they are safe and that it is your job to keep them safe.** Remind them that there are people in the community and at school who also help to keep them safe, such as police officers, firefighters, and security guards. You might say, "Even if you don't see them, there are always people working behind the scenes to protect children and adults at school and in the community."

**Model acceptance and avoid stereotypes.** Talk with your child about tolerance and how actions of individuals do not mean an entire country or group of people are bad or dangerous.

**Emphasise your family value of caring for each other and others.** Point out situations in daily life when people help and show kindness to others

**No matter what the nature of your issue, or how overwhelming it may seem, the wide scope of expertise available through the EAP is there to support you as you work towards a positive resolution.**