

Helping Children Feel Safe: A Parent Guide



Create Safety & Reassurance	Let children know they are safe now. Keep routines as consistent as possible. If they ask if it could happen again, answer honestly but reassure them adults are working hard to keep them safe.	<i>"You are safe right now. Grown-ups are working hard every day to keep you safe, and I'm here for you."</i>
Listen First, Talk Second	Invite children to share what they've heard or seen. Correct misinformation gently, using age-appropriate language. Don't force conversation—sometimes children process through play, drawing, or silence.	<i>"I know you may have heard people talking. Can you tell me what you've heard or what you're thinking about it?"</i>
Normalize Feelings	Let them know it's normal to feel scared, angry, confused, or even nothing at all. Reassure them they are not alone.	<i>"It's okay to feel sad, mad, or even not sure what you feel. Lots of people feel that way after something scary."</i>
Limit Media Exposure	Reduce repeated news coverage or graphic images. For older youth, watch or read together and then discuss their reactions.	<i>"Let's turn off the news for now. If you want, we can watch or read something later together and talk about it."</i>
Model Calm & Coping	Children watch how adults respond. Share your feelings honestly but calmly. Show healthy coping skills such as deep breathing, exercise, or drawing.	<i>"I feel worried too sometimes. When I do, I take deep breaths or go for a walk—it helps me feel calmer."</i>
Encourage Connection & Comfort	Spend extra time together doing familiar activities—play, cook, read, walk. Encourage them to lean on trusted friends, teachers, or relatives.	<i>"Do you want to play a game together, go for a walk, or just sit close for a while?"</i>
Watch for Signs of Struggle	Notice changes in sleep, appetite, mood, or behavior. Seek help if children seem withdrawn or extremely fearful.	<i>"I've noticed you seem really quiet lately. I'm here to listen if you want to talk."</i>
Remind of Resources	It's okay to ask for help from counselors, schools, faith leaders, or doctors. Call, text, or chat 988 if your child or family is in crisis.	<i>"If talking to me isn't enough, we can ask a counselor or another safe adult to help us through this."</i>

The most important thing parents can do is to listen, reassure, and stay connected.
Healing takes time, but children feel safer and stronger
when they know the adults in their lives are present, calm, and caring.