

April 2025



Dear Families,

This month's newsletter focuses on having safety conversations with our children. With so much going on in our world, it can feel overwhelming to us adults as well as our children. The need for safety conversations can arise due to many possible situations such as a national or community event that our children might be aware of or the need for our communities and schools to discuss or prepare safety procedures with our students. During the school year, staff are responsible for multiple safety drills which can also affect children due to the possible need for these drills.

As counselors, we know the importance of communication between parents and children and how this can help children feel safe. When speaking on such difficult topics, it can be hard as a parent to feel confident with knowing how to start these conversations. Below are some helpful conversation starters as well as some resources to help you feel comfortable talking with your child and helping them navigate through topics that can be stressful for them.

In this article, [Talking to Your Children About Safety](#) from John Hopkins Medicine, they break-down conversation starters by age and list the following symptoms to look for to see if your child might need more help coping with safety concerns:

- Changes in behavior, such as increased irritability, anger, crying, or worry
- Regression in previously mastered skills, including toileting, sleeping, or self-care difficulties or
- Excessive clinginess toward parents or teachers
- Refusal to go to school
- Trouble concentrating or paying attention
- Increased physical complaints, such as headaches or stomachaches

This article also provides the following resources to continue safety conversations at home:

All ages:

My Body Belongs to Me by Jill Starishevsky

I Can Play It Safe by Alison Feigh

Grades K-2:

I Can Be Safe: A First Look at Safety book series by Pat Thomas and Leslie Harker

Watch Out! book series by Claire Llewellyn

Grades 3-5:

Be Aware: My Tips for Personal Safety by Gina Bellisario

Protecting the Gift: Keeping Children and Teenagers Safe by Gavin DeBecker

[Child Mind](#) also has an article on how to talk specifically about lock down drills and suggests that when we talk to our children we communicate and practice the following:

- Coping Ahead: in order to reduce anxiousness and help children feel in control, it can be helpful to inform children that we will be having a drill and that the school staff are in trained to handle these events
- Be Honest: Explaining that we most likely will never need these emergency plans. There are no current dangers, but if there is, teachers and staff have a plan to keep you safe. Normalize how thinking about these events are scary and help them list things or people that help them feel safe.
- Be Confident in Your Communication with Your Child: children react to us and we want to make sure we can come across feeling informed about our child's safety
- Don't Talk in Code: this can make children more concerned

[The Kids Mental Health Foundation](#) emphasizes that school-aged children report safety concerns as their top concern related to school. They recommend parents to start conversations with our children about school safety and concerns that they may have. Parents are encouraged to use open-ended questions with their children (i.e. "Tell me more about what worries you"). If parents are aware of upcoming safety drills, it can help to check-in with our children before and after.

If a safety concern in or outside of school should arise, The Kids Mental Health Foundation has tips and conversation points in the article, [Talking to Kids About Current Events](#). In the article they list the following bullet points to help address a safety concern:

- Check-in with yourself
- Set up a time to talk
- Try only to give small bits of information at once
- You don't need to know all the answers-that's okay!
- Try to be as objective as possible (don't add judgement)
- Normalize the emotions

The article also mentions ways families can cope with stress during this time:

- Limit your consumption of news; potentially to 30-60 minutes a day
- Model coping strategies
- Think of ways you can help
- Remember to care for yourself first

After having these conversations, it might be helpful to use some coping strategies to help ourselves and our children. Here is a [List of 99 Coping Skills](#) parents can use with their children.

Another great coping resource is to use prayer to help us model coping strategies for our children. If your family is Catholic, here is a list of [Guardian Angel Prayers](#) that we can pray with our children.

Feel free to reach out with any questions or concerns,

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