

Pointers For Parents

Talking to Kids About Terrorism

(NAPSA)—Helping your child grow into a healthy and responsible adult is a rewarding part of being a parent, but it's not always an easy job. How do you help your child cope with issues, like violence and terrorism, that you're not sure how to handle yourself?

In the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11, both adults and kids are still trying to come to terms with the devastation and loss of life.

Experts at the National Institute of Mental Health suggest that parents and other caring adults explain what happened as well as they can and encourage children to talk about their feelings. Listen to kids without judgment.

For both parents and children, sadness is normal and healing takes time. It's okay to have the routine of day-to-day living interrupted while you work through feelings of grief, fear and helplessness.

Kids need to see that their parents are calm and in control. Parents need to help their families get back to the routine of living.

It's also important for parents to be alert and watch for reactions that may occur weeks or even months after traumatic events, such as nightmares, withdrawal, problems with friends, or depression. In addition, kids—and adults—are more at risk of using and abusing drugs and alcohol during stressful times.

"Parents need to connect emotionally with their child," says Dr. Phillippe Cunningham, a research scientist at the Medical University of South Carolina. He says that during difficult times children learn from watching their



parents. He offers the following suggestions to keep the lines of communication open:

- Establish a regular weekly routine of doing something special, such as going out for a walk, that will allow you to talk with your child
- Hold regular family meetings, giving each person a chance to talk without interruption, and allowing only constructive feedback
- If at all possible, a parent should be home after school or try to arrange for some type of adult supervision—even if it's just a neighbor dropping by
- Families should eat together as often as possible and use mealtime to discuss current events, popular music, fashion, school or something else of interest to children

For additional information, visit www.theantidrug.com, the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign's online resource for parents. The site offers tips on what parents can do to keep their children drug-free. A brochure, "Keeping Your Kids Drug-Free: A How-to-Guide for Parents and Caregivers," is also available through the Web site or by calling 1-800-788-2800.