



*Developing Potential without Limitations*

## Talking to Children about Acts of Terrorism

### Advice for Parents

**Take time to talk about terrorist attacks.**

Children look to their parents for guidance and reassurance. Even if your children are reluctant to talk about it at first, take the lead. What you say matters.

**Review what they understand.**

As your children continue to deal with terrorist episodes, they may have misconceptions or misunderstandings about what took place, even if they have followed the news accounts. Talk about it in terms they can understand.

**Identify your children's fears.**

Children may have unrealistic fears that we do not anticipate. They might fear an attack on their home or loss of their parents. Take time to find out what your children are thinking about and reassure them.

**Limit television exposure.**

Television news presents highly disturbing images and victim accounts that can be too frightening for most children, particularly those under the age of 12.

**Help your children express their feelings about the tragedy.**

Share your feelings with your children, but set a good example by expressing your feelings in an appropriate and mature manner. Extreme expressions of anger and grief may not be helpful to your child's sense of security and self-control.

**Express anger in an appropriate manner.**

It is understandable that children feel angry, but the target of that anger should be the terrorists. Discourage stereotypes and prejudice which grow so easily from hate and fear. If a British citizen commits an act of terrorism, it does not represent all British citizens.

**Spend some family time in normal, reassuring activities.**

Bake a cake. Go for a walk. Play a favourite game. Do something together as a family that helps your children feel comfortable and secure.

Advice originally (adjusted for UK context) from <http://curry.virginia.edu/research/projects/threat-assessment/talking-to-children-about-terrorism>

**For Additional Information**

[National Association of School Psychologists](#)

[Purdue Extension: Terrorism and Children](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics - Communicating with Children about Disasters](#)