



22 October 2014

We were saddened to hear about today's tragic events in Ottawa and the thoughts of the Toronto District School Board community are with all those affected by this senseless violence.

As we begin to process today's events, we realize that children may experience a wide range of reactions and emotions. It is with that in mind that our Professional Support Services staff have prepared the following tips that can help during this difficult time:

1. Bring up the topic at a time and place where a discussion can occur. If there are distractions, a shortage of time or if either you or your child are too tired or busy, it is likely the conversation will be interrupted.
2. Begin by listening and questioning. Let your child tell you what they believe they know, how they learned it and how they are feeling. Don't rush to correct or reassure. Allow them to finish their thoughts. Open-ended questions are better than specific ones. It is better to ask, "How are you feeling about what happened?" than "Are you scared because of what happened?" You can be a bit more specific if general questions fail.
3. Respond to what your child tells you. Their concerns may be specific or general, concrete or abstract, closely related to the events or related very little. Address what they are concerned about. Don't overload children with information or solutions. Talk to them with ideas they can handle at their age. If you help them with their concerns today they will likely share more in the future.
4. It is normal for people to try to make sense of things when a serious loss occurs. Allow your child to share his or her ideas and speculations. Help them to separate what they know from what they are guessing about.
5. Limit exposure to media coverage as it can become overwhelming.
6. Be aware that new stresses may open old wounds. When a child is confronted with a crisis, losses and upsets from the past may be remembered. The child may or may not wish to talk about these old issues.
7. Talk about specific things you can do to make your child feel secure.
8. While tragic events can be extremely upsetting, it can be helpful to remind children that this type of event is very rare.
9. Children deal with stress in many different ways and at different paces. While children may not wish to talk today, they may wish to talk in weeks or days to come. Follow up discussions may be helpful.

Additional supports are available through our Professional Support Services department. Parents, students and staff are encouraged to contact their school principal for more information. These supports will continue to be offered for as long as they are needed.

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