

## Talking to children about current events

If you have watched the news lately, you know that there is a lot going on in our world, some of it is good and some of it is horrible. As adults we have our opinion of what is happening, but what about children that may not understand what is going on, but can see and feel the emotions of those around them. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service believes that it is important for adults to talk with young children about what is happening so they can understand and feel safe and supported.

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network recommends these steps. Although these steps are related to the Orlando shooting, the steps can be used to talk about any major current event.

- **Start the conversation.** It might be hard to know where to start, but starting the conversation is the first step. Staying silent and trying to shield your child from what is happening might make things worse because they won't know what is happening or are finding out information from other people.
- **Find out what they already know.** Ask your child what they already know or have heard from others. It is important during this time that you listen to what they are saying, but also their fears of concerns.
- **Correct inaccurate information.** It is important that as you listen to your child, you gently correct any inaccurate or misinformation. Make sure that what you share is age-appropriate.
- **Encourage questions.** Encourage your child to ask you questions and answer those questions as best you can.
- **Limit media exposure.** In our world of 24/7 instant media cover, it is important to limit the amount of media coverage. Young children should not be exposed to media coverage because it's too hard to know what will be shown.
- **Understand common reactions.** Children may be distracted or worried about the event that happened or may want to be near loved ones more often. Know that these are common reactions and should be supported as much as possible to help children through them.
- **Be a role model and talk about your feelings about the event at a level they can understand.** Talk about the helpers that are involved so children can see the good in any bad event.
- **Be patient.** Remember that children get stressed like adults, so you may need a little extra patience as children try to process what is happening. They may act out, need extra support or may not tell you what they need at all, so be sure to check in with children and support them as they need it.
- **Reach out for help if you think reactions are continuing or are interfering with a child's ability to function.** Contact your local health provider or other organizations that can help children deal with trauma and grief.