Talking to Children About Media Exposure to Violence

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Things to Consider before Conversation

- Age of child
- Home Environment
- What you hope to achieve
Age of Child

Determines where and how much exposure child has with media

Determines child’s ability to distinguish between pretend and reality

Determines how much information you will share with child
Home Environment

- Where does child spend at least half of their day?
- Where does a parent have some control of what child views?
- Where does child develop a sense of how to handle conflict?
- Where does child develop a sense of safety?
Home Environment

- Limit exposure
- Choose what they watch
- Avoid watching and discussing news while they are present
- Avoid cartoons and games that make violence “fun”
School-Aged Child

Home Environment

- Limit exposure
- Consider installing monitoring tools
- Make sure that your child knows that it’s ok to ask questions about what they see
- Acknowledge your child’s fears or concerns
- Give short, age-appropriate information
Adolescent

Home Environment

01 Limit exposure
02 Talk about acceptable viewing
03 Ask what they know about a situation that has occurred
04 Talk about your own feelings about the event
05 Develop safety plans together
06 Check back in later about the event
What you Hope to Achieve through Conversation

Making
- Making your child feel safe

Helping
- Helping your child feel a sense of control

Giving
- Giving your child ideas for dealing with feelings of fear/anxiety

Sharing
- Sharing your values around handling anger/frustration
Be Aware of

Child not discussing fears but expressing them through

- Sleep disturbances
- Regressive behavior - bed wetting
- Anxiety - nail biting, hair pulling
- Appetite changes
- Fear of leaving home
- Unexplained changes in behavior
For All Ages:

- Keep your home routine
- Give extra hugs
- Point out things that are going well
- Get help if needed
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