

Supporting Children When Violence has Occurred



Prepared by
Beverly Weathington, LMSW
www.mpsi.wayne.edu

We Would Like Childhood to Be



Innocent



Carefree



Joyful

Reality: Despite Our Best Efforts



- ▶ **Children are more likely to be exposed to crime and violence than adults***
 - ▶ Directly
 - Being victimized
 - ▶ Indirectly (including media exposure)
 - Witnessing someone being victimized

*US Department of Justice

How Children Often Hear About Acts of Violence



- ▶ Media Exposure
- ▶ Hearing you talk about it
- ▶ Talking to siblings and peers



Violence Exposure and Children



Violence exposure makes a child feel fearful and unsafe and creates questions around:

- ▶ Am I safe?
- ▶ Is my family safe?
- ▶ Who will protect me?
- ▶ Are random, unpredictable things always happening?



Assess Yourself Before Supporting Your Child



- ▶ Children are as aware of our language, tone and emotions as they are of what we say. So before talking to your child:
 - ▶ Think about your own feelings about the event
 - ▶ Seek support in calming yourself
 - ▶ Think about how important you are in helping your child to feel safe



When Talking to Your Child about Violence



Age Appropriate

- What a child can understand
- What a child needs to know

Questions

- Ask child what he/she knows
- Understand that a child will ask why an event happened - it's okay not to know

Feelings

- Explain that it is normal to feel sad, scared, angry
- Share that you will help your child deal with feelings

Being the Anchor for Your Child



1

Offer Assurances

Talk about the love and safety of your home



Talk about people who help to keep others safe

2

Stay Available

Watch for ways that your child may be asking for comfort



Plan special times to spend with your child

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3

Maintain Routines

Keep your child's sleep and meal routines



Be patient if your child is having difficulty with sleeping, eating, bathroom routines

Creating a Safe Environment At Home



- ▶ Limit media exposure
- ▶ Be aware of your feelings and stress levels
- ▶ Offer calming moments – yoga for kids, crafting, nature walks, playing or listening to music
- ▶ Plan moments to rely on what gives you peace – prayer, meditation, mindfulness



Be Active in Creating a Safer World



- ▶ Make your child aware of who he/she can turn to for help in your community
- ▶ Become aware of safety protocols in your school district
- ▶ Let your child know that they can always discuss safety issues with you
- ▶ Be supportive of teachers, store clerks and others impacted by violence
- ▶ Make your child aware of donations or efforts that you are making towards making your community safer
- ▶ Advocate for and support candidates who support your ideas of a safer world



Remember Not to Let Fear Take Away the Wonder of Childhood



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