

School Violence: Coping with Anxiety

With the recent event that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton Connecticut, children can be some of the youngest victims of violence. Incidents of violence may cause your child to express fear of going back to school. Here are a few ways that might help in coping with a child's reaction to this event.

How to Deal With Fear and Anxiety

- Fear is a normal reaction to any danger that threatens life or well-being.
- After a disaster or event, a child may be afraid of recurrence of injury or death, being separated from family or being left alone.
- Recognize that your child is scared and frightened.
- As a parent it is important to understand to types of fear and anxiety that children face.

Advice to Parents

- It is very important for the family to remain together.
- Reassure your child with your actions and words and provide comfort.
- Talk to your child about their fears and listen closely to what they express.
- Don't avoid talking about the event. You should discuss what happened and answer any questions that a child might have.

Settling Down

- Parents should indicate to the child that they are maintaining control. Be understanding as well as firm and supportive. Make decisions for children where appropriate.
- It is natural for a child to want to be close to their parents and for the parents to want to protect their child.
- Parents should be aware of their own fears and uncertainties that he/she might be feeling. This can impact the child.
- Parents should make an effort not to focus upon any immature behavior that a child might be expressing.

How can parents recognize when to seek professional help?

It is time to seek help if:

- Children who develop problems with sleeping for more than a few weeks
- If the clinging behavior does not diminish
- If fear becomes worse