

# TALKING TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT TRAGEDY



When tragedies like the events that unfolded at Sandy Hook Elementary occur, children are exposed to news, discussion and visual images of the events. You can help the children in your life cope with their feelings, feel safe and even respond with positive actions:

## 1. START A CONVERSATION.

Invite conversation by asking, “How are you feeling about what happened at...?” or “Are you scared about what happened at...?”. If your child clearly isn’t interested in talking about it, then don’t push.

Let the child’s concerns guide the discussion. It’s best to acknowledge their feelings, saying things like, “I know this is scary.” Reassure your child that they are safe. Let your child tell you what they believe they know, how they learned it and how they are feeling.

Help your child understand that they should approach a conversation with their classmates about the tragedy in a sensitive manner.

If possible, try to limit his/her exposure to the news media, and balance it with positive stories, such as the acts of bravery, generosity and kindness of ordinary people in Newtown, Connecticut.

## 2. HELP THEM TAKE CONSTRUCTIVE ACTION.

One way to help children deal constructively with their feelings is to give them an opportunity to contribute to relief and recovery. Discuss what they or your family can do to help: helping raise funds at school or with a club or team, making a donation, and telling friends and family how to help.

## 3. RESPOND TO CHANGES IN THEIR BEHAVIOUR.

Children deal with stress in many different ways and in many different paces. While your child may not wish to talk today, he/she may wish to talk in the days or weeks to come. Do checkups once a week until the crisis is over.

If your child is having difficulties coming to terms with what happened, it might be best to ask for help – social workers and psychologists are available for consultation at your school.