

Tips for How to Engage a Child Following a School Shooting Threat

1. **Model calm and control.** Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Avoid appearing anxious or frightened.
2. **Reassure children they are safe.** Depending on the situation, point out factors that help ensure their immediate safety and that of their community.
3. **Remind them trustworthy people are in charge.** Explain that emergency workers, police, firefighters, etc are working to ensure everyone's safety.
4. **Let children know it is okay to feel upset.** Explain feelings are okay when a stressful or traumatic incident occurs. Let children talk about their feelings and help put them into perspective.
5. **Tell children the truth.** Don't try to pretend the event has not occurred or that it is not serious. Children are smart. They will be more worried if they think you are too afraid to tell them what is happening. At the same time it will be important to tell children that while the threat of a school shooting is real, the chances they will be personally affected is low.
6. **Stick to the facts.** Don't embellish or speculate about what has happened. Don't dwell on the scale or scope of the incident, particularly with young children.
7. **Maintain a "normal" routine.** To the extent possible stick to normal classroom or family routines but don't be inflexible.
8. **Be aware of children at greater risk.** Children who have a connection to this particular event, have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of a mental health professional if you are at all concerned.
9. **Keep lines of communication open between home and school.** Schools are a good place for children to experience a sense of normalcy. Schools should have access to a number of resources such as mental health services. Parents should let their child's teacher or school mental health professional know if they have concerns or feel their child may need extra support.

Tips developed from "Helping Children Cope With Terrorism - Tips for Families and Educators"
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