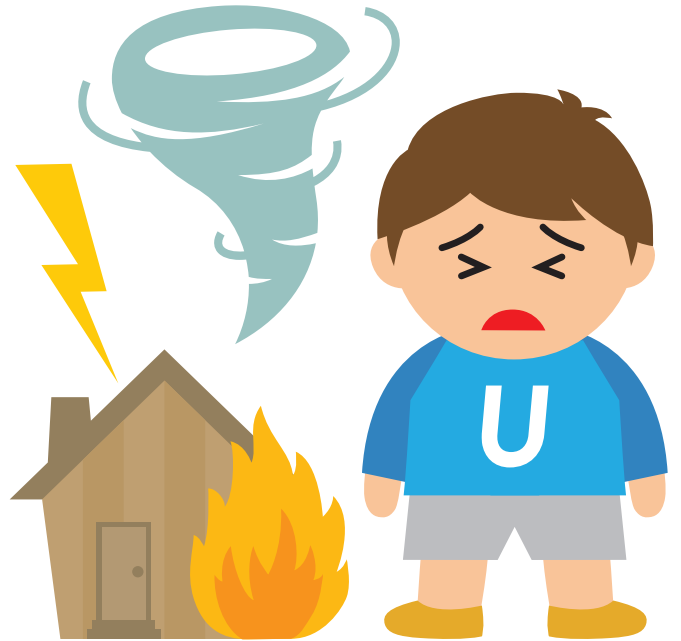


How to discuss difficult news with your child

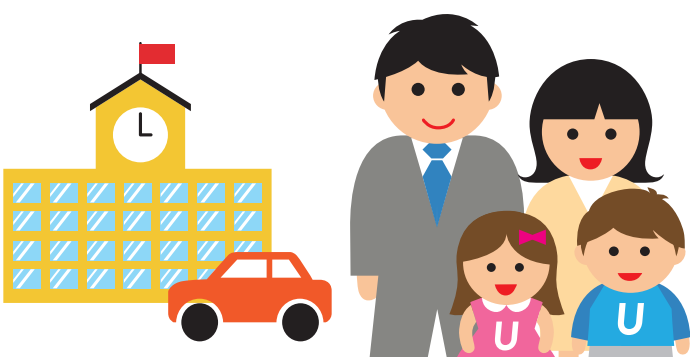
When children are exposed to news of violent and tragic events, such as natural disasters or mass shootings, they may start to worry that something similar could happen to them or their loved ones. By openly discussing these events and outlining the family's emergency preparedness plan, parents can alleviate their child's concerns and model healthy coping strategies.



Start a dialogue

Ask children what they have heard about recent events and how they feel about it. Then, depending on their response and maturity level, discuss the relevant facts and answer their questions honestly.

One effective way parents can reassure their children is by emphasizing the family's preparedness plan. For example, discuss who will pick them up from school in case of an emergency, go through your home emergency kit together or explain how your home is earthquake proof.



Conversation tips

Age-appropriate language:

Use words your child can understand and speak in a calm, gentle voice.

Reassuring body language:

Get down to your child's eye level and hold his/her hand.

Sharing acts of kindness:

Hearing stories of strangers helping each other or community philanthropy efforts can be uplifting.

Meaningful ways to cope:

Ask if your child wants to do something special for those affected by tragedy, such as hosting a lemonade stand to collect money for earthquake victims or writing letters of support.

When to seek help

If a child's concerns result in refusal to attend school, fear of outdoor activities, trouble sleeping or difficulty focusing in school, schedule an appointment with your child's pediatrician. A pediatrician will conduct a general health assessment and refer your child to the appropriate mental health specialist, if necessary.

