



## Help Your Child Feel Safe in an Unpredictable World

### Strategies to Maintain Calm

- **Control the conversation**

Children's stress levels increase when learning about disasters, terrorism or scary stories on the news and may experience heightened anxiety when repeatedly exposed to them.

- **Limit exposure**

By age 18, the average child in the US has seen 16,000 simulated murders and 200,000 acts of violence via media – young children cannot distinguish real from acting, and this may leave them feeling like their world is scary or bad things might happen at any moment.

- **Minimize access to violent images**

Controlling images helps children feel safer and more secure and less likely to engage in aggression themselves.

- **Discourage “they” against “us” attitude toward cultures and countries**

This is where fears develop into prejudice.

- **Manage (don't over control) communication**

Be aware of what your child is exposed to. Tweens and teens should have some freedoms AND it's good to know how they are engaging.

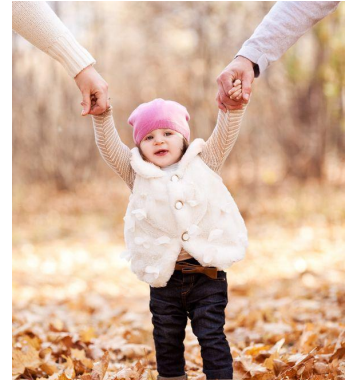
- **Invite children to talk**

Ask if they have worries and listen to understand. Be honest – “Why do people kill other people?” Say, “I don't know” if you really don't know.

- **Acknowledge when guessing or assuming** Stress the importance of noting fact vs fiction.

- **Keep conversations appropriate for age level**

Only provide details your child needs to know and let them take the lead if you aren't sure. Dig a little into their interest - Might want to ask the child, “I wonder why you are thinking about that today?”



- **Be your child's calm center**

Role model self-regulation. It's important for adults not to overwhelm children with adult's own worries.

- **Use reflective listening to normalize emotions**

Validate your child's ideas and questions – “Sounds like you feel worried learning remotely. Tell me about your biggest concern or frustration.”

- **Recognize your child's strength and your family's strength**

Notice when your child makes healthy and safe choices (for example, holding your hand to cross the street, calling you when stuck at a party and scared) and celebrate what your family is doing well.

- **Recognize when your child/family needs professional help**

Notice if your child is exhibiting repeated red flags for an extended period of time (changes in sleep, eating, social interactions, aggressive or passive behavior, withholding, withdrawn, academic behavior)

