



Help Your Child Feel Safe in an Unpredictable World

Gun violence at the start of the new school year is exactly what children and parents don't need. **Here are some tips to help your child feel safe and secure as the year begins:**

1. Pay attention to your own emotions. If possible, before you talk with your child, connect with trusted people in your life and process those immediate reactions in response to this frightening events in the news. Another well researched option is "Write and Rip" - take a few minutes to write down your unedited responses to the events and when you are done, tear up the page and throw it away. Write with abandon.



2. Notice any changes in your child's behavior, relationships, eating or sleeping. If your gut tells you that they seem "off," trust that. Check in and maybe start with reflective listening, "Seems like you're feeling kind of down right now." Or, "Looks like you're concerned about something." Reflective listening works better than lots of questions. They are a gentle invitation to tell you more without any pressure.

3. If your child comes to you with their worries about gun violence (or any other concern), **a good start is again reflective listening.** In this conversation, you want to check in to understand what they know about any given situation that is worrying them. Kids often have misinformation and you can help provide accurate info. Be sure to answer questions honestly and give truthful information in an age appropriate way. (One mom recently told their child that they were attending a bulletproof school. Not a great idea. Kids need to be able to trust you 100% if they are to feel safe.) You might also ask, "What are your friends saying about this situation? How are they feeling about it?" Both children and teens are often more comfortable talking about their friends than themselves, but it will give you an idea about what's going on with them. You can even ask if they might be feeling some of the same ways.

4. Maintain daily routines. This doesn't mean doing everything at the exact same time every day, but doing them in the same order. If your family doesn't have routines, sit down with them and create some together. Routines are powerful in helping kids feel safe and secure. They also help your brain relax -- you don't have to figure out what to do next. Everyone knows. You'll see a lot more cooperation too.

5. Signal safety to your kids through your body language, tone of voice and actions. Learn brain calming practices and do them daily. Your kids pick up on your inner state. You don't need to be a Buddha, but regular brain calming will change the whole atmosphere of your family and your kids never needed this more. Being playful or silly helps a lot too if you can calm your own brain enough to lean into joy. If you didn't grow up with playful parents, it is a learnable skill. Watch your partner or friends who do it naturally.

We are happy to help.

Reach out to us at Solutions@peaceathomeparenting.com.

