

Talking to our Children about School Shootings

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Having and facing fear is a normal part of every child's developmental journey. Fear of the dark, fear of being away from their parents, and fear of the hidden dangers that await under the bed, to name a few.

On February 14th, 2018, once again, we were all faced with the fact that our children live a very scary reality, the possibility of school shootings. One student survivor of the Parkland shooting reminded us all that they have grown up in the post-Columbine world, where active shooter drills are part of their school life experiences.

School safety is once more at the forefront of the nation's mind, with every school talking about it. Our children are hearing about this from teachers, counselors, and law enforcement. They hear about it on the news, at little league, social media, and even kids church. But, what do parents' conversations with their children about this topic look like?

The American Association of School Counselors recommends the following:

- Try to keep routines as normal as possible. Kids gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.
- Be honest with kids and share with them as much information as they are developmentally able to handle.
- Listen to kids' fears and concerns.
- Reassure kids that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who do bad things.
- Parents and adults need to first deal with and assess their own responses to crisis and stress.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.

You can find this article at:

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/shooting-resources>

It is important to note that children do not have to be directly impacted by a shooting at their school to be deeply affected from hearing about a school shooting.

A great article from Relevant Children's Ministry also gives parents great pointers for having these important conversations. The article recommends the following:

- Start by finding out what they know
- Protect them from too much information
- Focus more on their feeling than on the event itself
- Understand what they can process developmentally
- Don't avoid the hard questions
- Seek professional help if needed

<https://www.relevantchildrensministry.com/2018/02/talking-to-children-about-school.html>

Finally, taking time to sit with your child, whether they are preschoolers, middle- or high-schoolers, and remind them of the following truth: God is our protector. When I was a child, I always found comfort in God's promises. Read Psalm 91 together and remind yourselves that, "Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. **This I declare about the Lord:** He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I trust him." (Psalm 91:1-2)



NBA Mental Health Initiative Guest Blogger Sarah Serrano is enjoying the adventure of a lifetime in her role as a wife and homeschooling mother of two little boys. She loves worshiping and serving alongside her community of faith, Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in Coral Gables, Florida, and as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker provides services to the community through her mental health counseling practice, Bienestar Counseling & Education. www.bienestorce.com, sarah@bienestorce.com

With hopes to support the prioritization of mental health and wellness in the life of the church, the **NBA Mental Health Initiative** aims to establish the necessary awareness and understanding required to counter stigma and change the landscape of conversation regarding mental illness and disorders within the church. Learn more at www.nbacares.org/mental-health.