



# School Safety Newsletter

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## How to Talk to Your Kids About the Attacks in Paris

Time, November 14, 2015

<http://time.com/4112751/how-to-talk-to-your-kids-about-the-attacks-in-paris/>

### **Don't dismiss their fears, but be reassuring.**

When terrible events happen, such as the attacks on Paris, parents' immediate instinct is to shield their children from them. While this is perfectly natural, particularly as parents are probably having difficulty wrapping their heads around the events too, it may not always be the best approach, according to experts.

"Don't delay telling your children," says Harold Koplewicz, President of the Child Mind Institute. "It's very likely that your child will hear about what happened, and it's best that it comes from you so that you are able to answer any questions, convey the facts, and set the emotional tone."

Figuring out what your child has learned and answering any questions they have in terms they can understand is usually the best approach. "By initiating this dialogue, and allowing and encouraging your children to express their feelings, you can help them build healthy coping skills that will serve them well in the future," says Koplewicz.

It's important to try and stay calm as you talk through the events. Children pick up their cues from their parents so if you act anxious they will be anxious.

Trust your instincts too. Kids vary in levels of anxiety, and vulnerability. You know your kid and what they can handle better than anyone.

Here's an age by age guide to keeping the discussion developmentally appropriate.

For **Pre-school kids**: This is the only age which experts recommend trying to avoid the subject a little. Children younger than five tend to confuse facts with fears, says Koplewicz, so limiting access to news and watching what you say is advisable. Answer questions, but carefully. "Remember, you don't have to give them more details than what they ask for."

For **elementary school aged** kids, most psychologists suggest letting the kids lead the way. "If the kids are aware of what happened, a parent's discussion should be focused on the child's well-being," says psychologist Paul Coleman, author of *Finding Peace When Your Heart Is in Pieces*. "The details of who, what, when, and why should guide the discussion to the child's deeper (perhaps unstated) concerns."

You do not need to delve into details like the exact number of people who died or that the attacks were coordinated, and try not to be overly dramatic or use frightening words, says Coleman. "If you are very upset and they notice, reassure them you will be fine but you are just sad at the news."

But don't avoid or disregard your kids' questions either; older children (aged 6 to 11) are comforted by facts. "For kids this age, knowledge can be empowering and helps relieve anxiety," says Koplewicz.

Try not to dismiss their fears as foolish, although therapists say it's fine to point out that events like these are rare and unlikely to happen to the kids. Their fears are natural. Children at this age are egocentric and believe that any bad thing that happens anywhere is heading their way.

*Protecting our  
future through  
information  
sharing*

### **In This Issue**

- How to Talk to Your Kids About the Attacks in Paris
- Next Monthly Webinar - December 2, 2015
- A Note from the Illinois School Resource Officers Association (ILSROA)
- Codes and Security Workshop - Addressing Safety Needs and Fire Safety Needs

## How to Talk to Your Kids About the Attacks in Paris(continue)

“Then let your children know that they are safe and loved,” advises Coleman. You can gently point out, with some degree of honesty, that such attacks are very rare, that the bad guys have been caught and the chances of such an attack happening to them are quite rare.

For **middle school aged** kids: Don’t assume, just because your kids are a little older now, that you know how they feel. Ask them if they’ve heard about the attacks and what they think. Psychologists suggest that being able to answer all their questions is not as key as just being around to help them process the news somewhere they feel safe.

“Answer their questions simply,” says Coleman, “and reassure them that they are safe and that adults are working hard to prevent things like this from happening again.” Kids at this age see things in terms of good guys and bad guys. They might be interested in more of the details, but experts still advise keeping those to a minimum.

And don’t panic if they seem blasé or indifferent about the attacks; all kids process scary information differently. “Children react to disturbing events in different ways,” says Koplewicz. “Some might want to spend extra time with friends and relatives; some might want to spend more time alone. It’s important to let your child know that it is normal to express things in different ways—for example, a person may feel sad but not cry.”

Encourage them to talk and express any fears, especially if they have been involved in any other scary or violent incidents recently. If appropriate, experts say, you might like to review any safety plans you have with them, if your home has fire escapes or if you have a gathering place in case of emergency.

For **high school kids**, who are probably reading a lot about the events on social media, and hearing about it from their friends, it might be worth explaining in a bit more detail what we know and what we don’t. These are complex issues and not likely to be solved soon, so they may as well be thinking about issues they will be facing in the years to come.

“It’s very typical for teens to say they don’t want to talk,” says Koplewicz. “Try to start a conversation while you are doing an activity together, so that the conversation does not feel too intense or confrontational.”

Experts also recommend that while it’s great to radiate calm, it’s also important to share your own feelings on the issue, as part of keeping the discussion going. “Reassurances that they won’t ever get hurt or lose someone in a terrorist attack will not be believed,” says Coleman. “Speak to them in terms of probabilities.”

And by all means talk to them about what to do in the case of an emergency, where they should go if they can’t get home or who they should call if they can’t reach you.

Finally, when the time comes, therapists say this is a good opportunity to talk to high school kids about violence, and its effects and other ways to solve problems or have your voice heard.

If kids really are still afraid after your reassurances, Coleman has a handy acronym of things to do: SAFE

**S: Search for hidden questions or fears.** Ask what else is on their mind about what happened, what their friends say about it and what their biggest worry is right now. “The goal is to not assume your child is okay because it would make you—the parent—more at ease to believe that is so,” he says. “Some children may not speak up about their fears or may be unable to articulate them without a parent’s willingness to ask questions.”

**A: Act.** Keep routines going—homework, bedtime rituals and so on—because they’re reassuring and distracting. “It is a good time to have them do kind things for others,” says Coleman. Little things like helping an elderly neighbor, or opening a door for a stranger “reminds them that there are kindnesses in this world.” This reduces the sense of helplessness.

**F: Feel feelings.** “Let them know their feelings make sense,” says Coleman. “Saying ‘There is nothing to worry about,’ teaches them that you may not be the person to speak to about their fears.” Let them talk it out and show that you understand.

**E: Ease Minds.** After you’re sure they’ve talked through their fears, you can assure them of their safety. “Reassure them that there are good people trying to help others and prevent future attacks,” says Coleman.

The number one thing most experts agree on is that your child needs is your time. “The best thing you can do as a parent is be available,” says Koplewicz. “Just spending time with him and reassuring him that an event like this is unusual can make a huge difference.”

**Monthly  
Webinars!**

Normally first  
Wednesday of  
Every Month  
at 10 am.

**Next  
Webinar**

**Wednesday  
Dec 2, 2015**

Each webinar  
has a round  
table discussion  
at the end.  
Questions are  
always  
welcome!

To participate, you  
must be a vetted  
member. For more  
information please  
email  
schoolsafety@isp.  
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## A Note from the Illinois School Resource Officers Association (ILSROA)

Written by: Deputy Kip D. Heinle, Madison County Sheriff's Office  
President, Illinois School Resource Officers Association, [www.ILSROA.org](http://www.ILSROA.org)

As SRO's, our job is to protect the students, staff, visitors and the school from outside threats, active shooters, and intruders. We train with our school and our fellow law enforcement officers so we can defend and protect the school against these threats. We have our annual fire, tornado and earthquake drills, but are we prepared in case we get trapped and have to shelter in place at school for 12-24 hours before somebody can rescue us due to a natural disaster? In Illinois we can experience all of these including a blizzard throughout our school year.

I have come up with a simple, cheap, \$25-\$40, disaster bucket that I encourage all my staff to keep inside their classroom. Most of the items can be found at school or laying around your house.

**5 Gallon Bucket:** This will be used to store everything, but can be used as a toilet in case you are trapped inside your classroom. \$5.00, at your local hardware store, or check with your school maintenance department they might have an old paint bucket laying around.

**Leather gloves:** To be used to pick up glass, rebar, blocks, steel or concrete that has fallen in your room, this will save your hands from getting cut up and will make lifting things easier. \$10.00 at your local store or check with your school maintenance or shop class they might have a few old pairs laying around.

**Toilet Paper:** Used in case you are trapped inside the classroom. Bring from home or check with your schools custodians.

**Bandages:** gauze, or quick clot or even female protection pads. Used to stop bleeding in case somebody is cut with glass or other ways. Bring from home, buy or check with your school nurse for some free ones.

**Water:** Have a few gallon bottles of water, buy full gallons or refill milk jugs

**Cups:** Used to drink the water, helps to ration the water. Bring from home or get plastic cups from the nurse or cafeteria.

**Flash Light or Glow Sticks:** Glow sticks are very cheap way to light up a dark area. Pack of 10 for \$1.00. These will glow for over 12 hours, unlike a flashlight.

**Food:** Have some crackers, cookies and various hard candy on hand. Very cheap, \$5-\$10.

**Belt:** Used as a cheap, but very good tourniquet to help stop bleeding and save a life. Bring an old belt from home.

**Tennis Shoes:** Use these in case your classroom is full of glass, concrete or other objects to help you walk around. Flip flops, high heels and dress shoes are useless walking around and through these building materials. Bring an old pair from home.

These are just a few suggestions for disaster buckets. Other items can be added like a battery power radio or various battery powered chargers for phones and blankets.





## Codes and Security Workshop - Addressing Safety Needs and Fire Safety Needs

<http://www.nfpa.org/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/school-fires/codes-and-security-workshop>

Final Report Released May 2015

National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) organized the School Safety, Codes and Security Workshop, which was held in December 2014, to pause and reflect on the trends, concepts and ideas in securing the school environment from acts of violence. How these models interact with or consider the impact on fire, life safety and building codes is unclear. This Workshop attempted to identify and understand the sometimes competing objectives of fire and security safety. United with the expectations of law enforcement and fire department personnel, who often arrive at the height of or just after an event has ended, the Workshop took stock of the current building, life safety and fire codes provisions for egress; how those in the security industry view school safety; how school systems deal with their own internal procedures; and what protocols are or should be in place for the first responder community.

- Read the final report from this workshop. (PDF, 5 MB) - [http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/sscsw\\_finalreport.pdf?as=1&iar=1&la=en](http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/sscsw_finalreport.pdf?as=1&iar=1&la=en)

### Related information

- School planning best practices (PDF, 191 KB), ASIS International - [http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/copy-of-bestpractices\\_school-planning--asis.pdf?la=en](http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/copy-of-bestpractices_school-planning--asis.pdf?la=en)
- School evacuation guidelines (PDF, 67 KB), Minnesota Department of Public Safety - <http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/ins-ed08-2014-delayed-and-staged-evacuation-strategies-for-schools.pdf?la=en>
- Locking classroom doors (PDF, 159 KB), Regional Office of Education, Illinois - [http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/locking-classroom-doors\\_-state-of-illinois-guidance.pdf?la=en](http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/locking-classroom-doors_-state-of-illinois-guidance.pdf?la=en)
- Risk management (PDF, 138 KB), ASIS International/RIMS Risk Assessment Standard - <http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/marc-siegel-asis-international-iso31000-process.pdf?la=en>
- Comprehensive School Safety Guide (PDF, 1.7 MB), Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Minnesota School Safety Center - <http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/minnesotaschool-safety-guide.pdf?la=en>
- School Emergency Response Planning (PDF, 1.5 MB), Gregg Champlin, School Planning & Natural Hazards Specialist, NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management - <http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/new-hampshire-dept-of-safetyschool-emergency-response-planning.pdf?la=en>
- NFPA Journal article from September/October 2003 issue - Stay or Go? Should U.S. schools have the option of using a delayed evacuation policy when it comes to fires and fire drills? (PDF, 1.1 MB) - [http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/nfpa-journal-article-delayed-evacuation-in-schools-2003\\_vol97\\_no5--pages.pdf?la=en](http://www.nfpa.org/~media/files/safety-information/for-consumers/occupancies/schools/nfpa-journal-article-delayed-evacuation-in-schools-2003_vol97_no5--pages.pdf?la=en)

### School Safety

#### Newsletter

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