Talk With Your Children About Violence

With the tragic news of the shootings at Virginia Tech, now is the time to talk with your child about preventing further tragedies. Think carefully about how much information your child can handle.

A younger elementary child should just be given brief, simple information, and assurances that you and his or her teachers are doing everything to promote safety. Be sure to monitor what your child sees on television.

Older elementary children and teenagers should be given more information. Tell your child that often those who will commit violent acts tell others what they are planning to do in advance. Often such threats are dismissed as "talking big." Tell your child that any threats of violence of any kind should be reported to a responsible adult immediately.

If your child is aware of another student who possesses a gun or another weapon, that should also be reported. In the past, violence in schools has been prevented because a student took the responsibility to take action in time to prevent a tragedy.

Also tell your older elementary child or teenager:

- **That schools are safe.** The administration, the teachers and the staff of your child's school are working to keep the students safe.
- **That rumors need to be checked out.** If your child has heard a rumor about a possible violent act, possession of a weapon or something else that could result in harm to others, it should be reported, even if it may seem to be an ungrounded rumor.
- **What to do in the event of a violent incident.** Most schools have a procedure in place to put into action in the event of a crisis. Your child should obey all instructions immediately.
- **That you are available to talk** at any time. Even though a tragedy has happened far away, it may still cause your child to be anxious and concerned.


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