

PARENTING TIPS

Dealing With Fear After Tragedy

Day to day life provides opportunities to teach children about God. It's the job of parents to frame the picture of world events, to help children understand life from God's point of view. Teachable moments become available in times of crisis. That doesn't mean that you preach or lecture. It means that you ask questions and carefully share information that can guide your children to right thinking.

So what do you say? How do you respond to their questions? How can you draw your children into productive discussions? What kinds of things can you do that will help your kids during this time?

Here are some things to consider when helping children deal with fear and questions about world events:

- * Be careful about lying to your children by saying, "It's all okay." Your children can see that things aren't okay. In fact, this kind of statement can be counterproductive and cause children to feel like they can't trust you, further increasing feelings of insecurity.
- * Explain that the world isn't out of control and help put these events into perspective. Pray with your kids about those directly involved in the tragedy.
- * God is with us always. We can trust him. His angels protect us. God loves us and cares for us and he is in charge (Psalm 46).
- * Answer your child's questions. Explain the details briefly in clear terms and then focus on the good that we see in God and in the people who are helping.
- * The solution for fear is to learn to trust. Trust is the ability to release control to another. Children can learn to trust when they take small steps of risk and have positive experiences over a period of time. Gently encourage children to take small risks of separation and then provide the comfort they need. During that process children need a lot of parental love, patience, encouragement, and support. Remember, it's God's presence that helps us through difficult times.

For other suggestions about helping children deal with anger, fear, and grief, consider the book Parenting is Heart Work. After all, emotions reside in the heart, and learning to connect with kids on a heart level can help them explore emotions in a healthy way.