


Dr. Shaked's Tips: Coping with Terror


TO MINIMIZE TRAUMATIC EFFECT OF TERRORISM:

- ↓ Exposure (news, TV coverage, social media).
Rule of thumb: if you're not learning something new, turn it off.
- ↑ Social support. Spend times WITH family, friend, and especially WITH your children.
- ↓ Disruption in daily life. Maintain work, school, sports & daily household routines.

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Continued

 Psychological distress, as preventative measure. Learn and implement good coping skills NOW. (You're doing this by being at this, talk by the way)

 Psychological distress symptoms after terrorism event.

- Seek help from an experienced psychologist in coping with terrorism.
- The trauma of terrorism is not only one imminent personal threat, but also observational experience, indirect trauma, or mass media trauma. Moreover, researchers have shifted the psychological consequences to include not exclusively PTSD, but also a spectrum of related sub-threshold conditions, dubbed posttraumatic stress *symptoms*.

 Additional traumatic events or loss, post terrorism event.

Kids' Possible Reactions to Terrorism

- Regressive behavior
 - Bedwetting, thumbsucking
- Safety/comfort seeking
 - Wanting to sleep in parents' room
 - Not wanting to go to school
- Fear, in question form: “Could that happen here?”
- Anxiety/stress manifesting through pain (e.g., belly ache)
- Preoccupation with violent/war games or movies
- Children exposed to prior trauma may have heightened response

Preschoolers

- May or may not have had exposure to the act of terrorism
 - No exposure to media
 - Protected at site (lockdown, school)
- Developmentally
 - Limited in identifying feelings and expressing emotions
 - Concrete thinking
 - Limited understanding of time and distance
 - Limited in distinguishing fantasy from reality

Preschoolers Continued

- What should a SuperMom do?
 - ✓ Consensus in literature: if hasn't been raised by child, do not discuss
 - ✓ Provide opportunity for expression through play
 - ✓ Do not allow exposure to TV, heated conversation, etc.
 - ✓ React calmly, model calmness
 - ✓ If child re-enacts trauma, join the play and re-enact safe ending
 - ✓ Keep explanations simple and concrete
 - ✓ Provide explanation in terms of character, not in terms of people
 - ✓ Highlight all the people who are protecting us (police, president, their teddybear...)

School Aged Children

- May or may not have had exposure to the act of terrorism
 - No exposure to media
 - Protected at site (lockdown, school)
- Developmentally
 - Ability to identify feelings
 - May or may not express emotions
 - Understand time and distance
 - Egocentric – think this is going to happen to them next

School Aged Continue

- What should a SuperMom do?
 - ✓ Gently start the conversation: “What have you heard about what happened in Tel Aviv today?”
 - ✓ Listen for fears, and normalize: “That boom *WAS* scary.”
 - ✓ Listen for misperceptions, but don’t challenge world view
 - ✓ Limit discussion of details
 - ✓ Normalize feelings. OK to share how you’re feeling – without falling apart
 - ✓ Maintain the usual routines for kids to feel safe
 - ✓ Can point out how rare event is: “This is on TV because it’s so rare”
 - ✓ Make this a teachable moment: focus on people coming together, on the “hero” in the news, etc.

Tweens and Teens

- Most definitely had exposure, through the media, social media, and through their friends
- Developmentally
 - Ability to identify feelings
 - May or may not express emotions – because they are teenagers!
 - Understand time, distance , and probabilities
 - Developing moral sense of the world

Tweens and Teens Continued

- What should a SuperMom do?
 - ✓ Start the conversation: “what have you heard about Brussels?”
 - ✓ If they say “nothing”, don’t push the conversation
 - ✓ Listen for fears, and normalize: “All that blood *WAS freaky*”
 - ✓ Listen for misperceptions, and correct: “Not all Muslims are terrorists.”
 - ✓ Normalize feelings, but also share how you’re feeling
 - ✓ Limit redundant TV/media exposure (“nothing new” rule)
 - ✓ Talk about probabilities (how rare event is), especially with older children
 - ✓ Writing is healing
 - ✓ Teachable moment: model healthy coping skills.
 - ✓ Empower by taking action: “Let’s write a song to the soldiers”

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Key Principles to Follow in Talking with Your Children about Terrorism

- Find out what your kids have heard or know
- Be prepared to talk about it over and over again, as terrorism is difficult to comprehend
- Bring the conversation to their level, using their language
- Keep it simple
- Allow your kids to express emotions in age appropriate way

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Key Principles to Follow in Talking with Your Children about Terrorism Continued

- Be present. Reassure your kids and provide parent/family support
- Maintain typical work/school/sports routines
- Model healthy coping, but don't fake it
- Empower your children. Do something good in a time of crisis
- See signs of distress? Take your child to a psychologist trained in coping with terrorism



**KEEP
CALM
BECAUSE
ITS THE
END**

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