

# Talking to Kids About School Shootings

---

*School shootings are scary and confusing — for kids and parents alike — and they happen all too often. During moments of crisis like these, parents are kids' best source of comfort and calm.*

That doesn't mean parents have to hide their worry. Even very young kids will sense that something is amiss. Talking openly shows kids it's okay to feel what they feel — and parents can stress what they're doing to cope with those feelings.

Franklin D. Roosevelt said, "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself," and psychological studies show that's true for kids, too. What they fear most is not strangers or guns or more police patrols near their school — it's feeling that scared again.

Flip this card for the top five ways parents can help kids cope with trauma.



**Children's Hospital Colorado**  
*Here, it's different.™*

## PEDIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH INSTITUTE

### **Be available**

Kids are likely to be scared and anxious in the aftermath of a crisis, and they may identify with the victims. Kids need a safe space to work through their emotions, so make yourself as accessible as possible — physically and emotionally.

### **Turn off the TV**

Kids don't understand the process behind what they see on the news. When they see coverage of the crisis, they perceive it as happening again, so it's best to limit the amount of crisis coverage kids can access.

### **Stay calm**

Kids will look to parents for cues on how to react. If parents are anxious, particularly about their child returning to school after a shooting, kids are likely to be nervous, too. It's okay to talk through worries with kids and admit your own, but as much as possible, project stability and calm.

### **Be open**

To work through their anxiety, kids need to tell their story. Give them plenty of time and space to do so.

### **Answer questions as best you can**

Many questions kids ask will be difficult, if not impossible, to answer. Explain that a school shooting is a random event and discuss steps the school will take to ensure students' safety, and remind them that their teachers are there to protect them.

For more on school shootings and other topics, or to learn how the Pediatric Mental Health Institute can help your child, visit [childrenscolorado.org/mentalhealth](http://childrenscolorado.org/mentalhealth) or call 720-777-6200.



**Children's Hospital Colorado**  
*Here, it's different.™*