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Talking regularly with youth about the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs reduces their risk of using in the first place.

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Prevention Action Alliance
6171 Huntley Road, Suite G
Columbus, Ohio 43229
PH: (614) 540-9985
FX: (614) 540-9990

Start Talking!



Building a Drug-Free Future

KNOW! School Lockdowns, Classroom Shelters, and Bulletproof Backpacks - Oh My!



It's a new school year. Students have gathered their supplies and are heading back to the classroom with their fresh binders, spiral notebooks, and bulletproof backpacks.

That's right, bulletproof backpacks. Once inside, some students will get to check out their school's new ballistic shelters. And before long, most schools will be back to practicing lockdown drills as well. It's unfortunate, but it's a reality. Some children find this type of preparedness comforting. Others find it confusing and frightening, and it produces varying levels of anxiety and stress.

Regardless of how your child feels about these measures, your child will look to you and school personnel for information and guidance. We should address any possible fears and answer any questions they may have. Try to establish a sense of normalcy and security so that when they are in school, they can focus on learning.

Fortunately, you're not alone. The National Association of School Psychologists provides the following tips when talking with young people about school violence:

Reassure children they are safe: Validate feelings of anxiety. Emphasize that schools are very safe and that school shootings are rare.

Make time to talk: Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Some children may not be ready to talk when you want to, so be patient. Look for cues that signal they are ready and are wanting to talk, like hanging around while you're doing the dishes, yardwork, etc.



Talk early and often about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Even when it gets tough.

Empowering Parents To Raise Their Children To Be Substance-Free



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Keep explanations developmentally appropriate: Early middle schoolers may ask if they are truly safe, and what is being done in their school to prevent violence and protect students. They may need you to be their filter between fantasy and reality. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.

Upper middle schoolers and high schoolers are likely to have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. Remind them of the important role they can play in helping keep their school community safe by following school safety guidelines, including not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats or other personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.

Review safety procedures: This includes procedures and safeguards at school and home. Additionally, help your child identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they can go if they feel threatened or at risk.

Observe children's emotional state: Not all children are good at expressing their concerns verbally. Watch for changes in behavior, appetite, and sleep patterns, as these can indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. Youth who have experienced trauma or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or children with special needs may be at greater risk for more severe reactions than others.

Limit television viewing of school violence: Even documentaries on an act of school violence from the past can be impactful. Be mindful of the content and amount of coverage a young person is exposed to. If at all possible, watch it with them and allow them to ask questions and discuss.

Remind your children that they can come to you with anything, and that sharing information on a possible act of violence is not snitching or gossiping—it can and has saved lives.

NASP has additional information for parents and educators on school safety, violence prevention, children's trauma reactions, and crisis response at www.nasponline.org.

Source: [National Association of School Psychologists: Talking to Children about Violence - Tips for Parents and Teachers.](#)