

The **h²b** Safer Guide on Talking to Children and Young People about Terrorism Attacks

In the aftermath of the 2015 terrorist attacks in Paris, children as young as nine were calling ChildLine¹, terrified that they might become a victim of a terrorist attack. We know that young people are informed by what they see and hear, particularly online and research shows that while children are becoming more aware of online threats, they aren't sure what to do when they see something online that upsets them.

Social Media has changed the way we consume information. When a major event happens, you may now find yourself logging into Twitter to find out what is happening, rather than checking tomorrow's newspaper.

Facebook Crisis Response

Facebook has used its influence for good in this instance; with the 'Crisis response' Hub. Recognising their increasing role in disaster relief, Facebook implemented the 'Safety Check' feature to alert your Facebook Friends that you are safe in a crisis. They have now developed 'Crisis response' to include the following options to help in a Crisis.²



Ask friends in the area if they're safe

If you know people near the affected area, you can ask them to mark themselves as safe.



Raise money

Create a fundraiser to help people recover from this crisis. Invite friends to donate and show their support too.



Donate to a fundraiser

Show your support with a donation. Every little bit can help.



Offer help

If you're nearby, let your community know if you can offer supplies, shelter, volunteer work or other types of help.

While Facebook have taken conscious efforts to support their community in the event of a crisis, the Twitter community found their own way to support those affected by the 2017 Terror Attack at Manchester Arena. As news spread on Social Media of the attack, Mancunians used the hashtag **#roomformanchester** to help those affected find shelter for the night. Friends and family of missing individuals publicly posted their photographs and encouraged Twitter users to re-tweet their post, in the hopes of finding their loved ones.



While the instant nature of social media can help in these circumstances, it can also expose children and young people to images, videos and information they may find very distressing.

The team at h²b Safer have created this guide with advice on how to talk to children and young people about terrorist attacks, with a focus on exposure to information online. An information page is included that you can share with children and young people in each year group; Under 5, Primary and Tweens & Teens.

1. <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-we-do/news-opinion/increase-calls-childline-paris-attacks/>

2. <https://www.facebook.com/crisisresponse/>

CHILDREN AGED UNDER 5 - Advice For Adults

Although children under 5 are unlikely to be exposed to online content or conversations in the playground about traumatic events, we still have included some age-appropriate support guidelines to help them deal with a traumatic event.



Protect Them

Young minds can distort what they hear or see, especially when they receive the information indirectly, such as over-hearing a conversation between adults or older children. So if your children are aged 5 or younger, be extra vigilant and protect them as best you can from hearing about frightening or traumatic world events.

Screen Time

We recommend that at any time, children aged 2-5 use no more than **one hour** of screen time per day. In the event of a crisis, terror attack, or traumatic event, make sure that the child will not be inadvertently exposed to the news. For example, if you allow your child to watch cartoons on your tablet and a 'BBC News Notification' pops up, they may inadvertently click on it.



Focus on the Positives

Talk to young children about helpers and heroes that support people in need. Ask them who their heroes are and discuss why that is. On the next page, we have created a document for young children where they can draw their own hero, or heroes.

Talk to Them

If you feel like you need to discuss the event with a young child, use words that are appropriate for their age; words they understand in bite-size chunks. Use honest and clear language and where possible, tell them information a little bit at a time, giving them the opportunity to think and come back with more questions.



The most important thing for you to do, with children of any age, is to offer reassurance and emphasise that traumatic events are very unusual and there are lots of safety checks in place to protect us.

Signs that young children may be stressed

- Nightmares and fears at bedtime
- Anxiety about sleeping alone
- Change in regular sleep pattern
- Frequent reliance on habits such as thumb-sucking or hair-chewing
- Change in eating habits
- Change in bowel movements
- Wetting the bed
- Increase in crying or tantrums
- Anxious tics, coughs or body movements

DRAW YOUR HERO

Heroes are all around us. They can be our parents, carers, our teacher, our favourite pop star or sportsperson.

Draw your favourite hero, or heroes, in the box below.



A large, empty rectangular box with rounded corners, intended for drawing a hero.

PRIMARY AGED CHILDREN - Advice For Adults

Should I Shield Them From The News?

You may be able to shield them from news at home, but you can't control what they are exposed to at school, or in the playground. You don't need to give them all of the facts; just enough information to complete a story around a difficult event by clarifying facts and correcting misperceptions. It's important to reassure them of their safety and give them the opportunity to ask any questions.

Pay Attention to Your Own Reactions

Children are very interested in how you respond to events, particularly negative ones and will learn from listening to your conversations with other adults. So be extra careful about what you say when children are near. Share your own feelings but show that you are in control of them and if you need to explore your own emotions to events, do so with trusted adults in an environment where children cannot see or hear what you are saying.



TOP TIP! Sometimes fear and rage can make us say things we don't mean. Be extra-careful of the language you use around children, as they will mimic you.

Reassure Them of Their Safety

These stories are upsetting for children because they can imagine something like this happening to them, or to people they know. If they do begin to ask questions, use phrases such as;



This type of news is very rare.



Security will be even tighter now.



The police will increase security to keep us safer.

Questions Surrounding Death

Discussions surrounding traumatic events may lead to young people asking questions surrounding death. If you feel you can, and it is appropriate to do so, be honest and try not to use euphemisms.

Barnado's booklet on 'How to explain death to children and young people... and help them cope!'³ explains;

'Try to use the word "death" or "dead" rather than phrases such as "gone to sleep", "lost" or "gone to a better place". These phrases cause confusion for young children and can lead to unnecessary anxiety.

"My mum told me that my granda died in his sleep. I am scared to go to sleep in case I die, and I feel I have to keep checking my parents during the night in case they have died." - **Cara, aged 8.**

After the 2017 Terror Attack on Westminster Bridge, Winston's Wish, the UK's first childhood bereavement charity, released a blog post on how to respond to children affected by the media coverage of the incident. If young children want specific facts about shooting, they advise also being honest recommending the following wording⁴;

"When someone is shot or stabbed, a bullet or blade goes into their body and causes them to bleed a lot... Our bodies need blood to make all the parts, like the heart and brain, work properly. If someone loses too much blood, their body stops working and they die."

However, be sure to avoid details. While the news editors will be selective in the images they choose to air, there may be other images or videos circulating online. For example, Twitter.



You don't need to go in to detail with children when describing the scene, or to show them images or videos of the event or aftermath because that may traumatise them. Reinforce this by warning them not to go searching on the internet for more stories or information, highlighting that they may not like what they find.

3. https://www.barnardos.org.uk/child_bereavement_booklet_explaining_death.pdf

4. <https://www.winstonswish.org/responding-children-affected-media-coverage-incident-westminster/>

FREDDIE'S SAFETY TIPS

RUN



HIDE



TELL



This is Freddie, our Safety Mascot.



If something scary is happening Freddie says you should:

RUN

If there is a safe route, RUN and Leave your belongings behind⁵.

HIDE

If you can't run, HIDE. Find somewhere safe and stay very quiet until you are found.

TELL

When you are safe and the danger has passed, find an adult or call 999.

If you see something that makes you feel uneasy or worried, tell an adult.

Who could you tell? List their names below.

ADULTS I CAN TRUST

5. PSHE Association in partnership with NaCTSO's 'Run Hide Tell Teacher Guidance Notes' (2017) - <https://goo.gl/M4ybah>

TWEENS & TEENS - Advice For Adults



We Experience the World Differently

Technological advancements in smart phone technology have fundamentally changed how we absorb news and current affairs. When a disaster happens, everyone - including journalists - immediately rush to Twitter to get information instantly.

Why is This Different?

In March 2017, when an attack took place in the vicinity of the Palace of Westminster in London, Twitter users complained⁶ that people were stopping to take pictures of the incident rather than helping those who were injured. Users were particularly encouraged not to upload images of those injured or deceased as they were not yet identified and their families had not been informed.

How would you feel if you found out someone you loved was hurt via a News Bulletin?

News programmes have particular laws they must abide by for their programming, and editors will be selective in the images and videos they choose to share or broadcast. Social Media does not have the same rules. While content can be reported as inappropriate on many platforms, it can sometimes take time for the posts to be removed, and screenshots of the content may also circulate.

Fake News

In May 2017, in the aftermath of the bombing at the Manchester Arena, images falsely claiming missing victims began to emerge; Trolls use images found on the internet and share them from accounts pretending to be a concerned parent.



After that attack, The Guardian released an article⁷ into 'The story behind the fake Manchester attack victims', including quotes from those whose images were falsely used. They state that after the EgyptAir crash in May 2016, the BBC reported on hoax victim posts, most of which originated in Mexico;

“Hoaxers later told journalists they used one man’s photo because he had cheated them out of money.
**“Our goal is to ruin his reputation.
We want the whole world to recognise his face.”**

Therefore in the wake of a tragic event, not only are we bombarded with un-censored material, but we now find it difficult to distinguish what is true from what is not. Considering how many Tweens and Teens have access to computers, phones, and social media accounts - It can be difficult to protect them from exposure to the media.

LEARN HOW TO REPORT

Many of the most popular social media apps and websites, such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, rely on users to report inappropriate content and will act quickly.

Visit our free safety centre to learn how to report inappropriate content online by clicking;



[h2bsafetycentre.com/h2report](https://www.h2bsafetycentre.com/h2report)

6. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsbeat/article/39353044/westminster-attack-rage-at-terror-selfies-on-social-media>

7. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/may/26/the-story-behind-the-fake-manchester-attack-victims>

TWEENS & TEENS - Advice For Adults

What You Can Do

As with children of any age, you must be aware and in **control of your emotions**; young people will be looking to you for guidance on how they should react. So don't overreact, lose your temper and try not to say things you might later wish you hadn't.

Reassure them that they are safe, that occurrences such as these are rare and unlikely to happen to them.



Be **available to discuss the event** with young people. If you're a teacher, you may find a way to connect the disaster to a lesson plan. If you are a parent, carer or guardian it may be helpful to provide the young person with a moment to ask any questions they have about the event.

Use **open-ended questions** to encourage discussion such as; How do you feel about what happened? or Why do you think this happened?

Talk to them about **media coverage** and discuss with students how the news media typically show sensationalist, or the most scary parts of an event. Warn them that the media are likely to repeat coverage for a period of time (eg 24 hours).



Discuss the **different places young people may be exposed to news content**. Not just on the TV or in the newspapers but also on Social Media; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram etc. Advise them that if the news upsets them and if they don't want to see it, they can **hide** posts, **report** posts or simply not go on the platforms for a day or two.



You can't protect them from being exposed to the news surrounding the incident but you can show them the control they have in managing what they see and how they react.

Signs that teenagers may be stressed

- Over-reacting to minor irritations
- Repetitively thinking about the traumatic event and frequently talking about it
- Withdrawing from friends, school, hobbies and life in general
- Pessimistic outlook on life including feelings of hopelessness
- Change in behaviour; behaving younger, being rebellious or needing independence
- Difficulties concentrating and sleeping

When to get medical help⁸



If you think your child is depressed, make an appointment with them to see your GP. If necessary, they can refer your child to their local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) for specialist help.

If you are worried about your child's mental health, you can call the charity Young Minds on their free helpline for parents; 0808 802 5544.

⁸. <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-depressed-signs>

If An Attack Happens



RUN

If there is a safe route, RUN and Leave your belongings behind.



HIDE

If you can't run, HIDE. Find somewhere safe and stay very quiet until you are found.



TELL

When you are safe and the danger has passed, find an adult or call 999.

⚠ NEVER STOP TO TAKE PHOTOS OR VIDEOS OF AN ATTACK

How to Spot Fake News



CONSIDER THE SOURCE

Is the Website, Newspaper or Page credible?



READ MORE

Headlines can be misleading, read in to the story to get the full context.



CHECK THE AUTHOR

Is the author credible? Are they real?



IS IT A JOKE?

If it is too unbelievable or funny, it may be a joke article.



ASK THE EXPERTS

Consult a respected or fact checking website (not Wikipedia!).

Control the Information You Are Exposed to

When an terrorist attack or disaster happens, not only do the news outlets report on it but it can take over our social media feeds too. When this happens, you have some control over the news you are exposed to. Here are some things you can do:



On Facebook, **HIDE** any posts that you don't wish to see by clicking the three dots at the top-right corner of the post.



On Twitter, **REPORT** any images or videos that are distressing or you don't think should be on there.



Be **ALERT** to Fake News. Trolls exploit people when they are most vulnerable; decide whether or not you believe information by it's source.



TALK to someone if you feel uneasy or upset by what you've seen.



Don't **LOOK** at those websites or apps for a day or two.

FURTHER INFORMATION FOR ADULTS



NPCC (National Police Chiefs' Council) ACT for Youth
Guidance and Lesson Plans
<http://www.npcc.police.uk/CounterTerrorism/ACTforYouth.aspx>



NSPCC
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk>
Search: Supporting Children Worried About Terrorism
0808 800 5000



Childline
<https://www.childline.org.uk>
Search: Worries About The World
0800 1111



Facebook Crisis Response
<https://www.facebook.com/CrisisResponse>



HM Government

Government Advice: Recognising The Terrorist Threat
<https://www.gov.uk/>
Search: Recognising the terrorist threat

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN



0800 1111



www.childline.org.uk



Victim Support Scotland



0345 603 9213



<https://www.victimsupportsco.org.uk>



Victim Support NI



028 9024 3133 & 028 7137 0086



<http://www.victimsupportni.co.uk>



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround>

Freeview & Youview: 201 / 204 (HD)
Freesat: 600 / 607
Virgin Media UK: 701 / 710 (HD)
Virgin Media Ireland: 608
Sky UK: 613 / 633
Sky Ireland: 613 / 638

England & Wales



VICTIM
SUPPORT



0808 168 911



<https://www.victimsupport.org>



Coming Soon...

'Tips for Staying Safe on Trips'



Make sure you're one of the first to get notified of future updates on our FREE Safeguarding Hub;

www.ineqe.com/Professionals

Sign up and receive the updates directly to your inbox!

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