

Chatham Child Care News

Monthly Newsletter

October 2001

Talking to Kids About Tragedy (How to respond to fears, questions)

As much as we try to protect our children from frightening news reports, there is likely no child in America who escaped the horror of seeing or hearing about Tuesday morning's terrorist attacks around the country. As you struggle to handle your own feelings about this unthinkable tragedy, consider these tips for talking with your children. How you respond to their fears, feelings, and questions is the key to helping them feel safe again.

Turn off the TV. Don't let your own desire to keep up with the news get in the way of your children's wellbeing. Even if your children are very young, the continual commentary, frightening speculation, and repeated replaying of the disasters on TV will only fuel their fears and insecurities, not to mention your own.

Try to control your response – it matters more than anything. If you're overcome by fear and sadness, your kids, even if they're very young, will pick up on that and it will make them feel even more scared. It's okay to share some of your feelings. You can let them know that you, too, feel sad for the children and families that have been affected. But also share any tips you have for dealing with your feelings: "I just keep reminding myself that my friends and families are safe and that there are lots of police, firemen, and others who are busy trying to protect us."

This will be easier to do if you have someone, such as a friend, clergy, or therapist, who can listen to your fears so you don't pass them along in the discussion with your child.

Reassure, reassure, reassure. If you're faced with a question you just can't answer, remember that the most important thing you can do for your children is reassure them that you'll do everything you can to keep them and the rest of the family



(including yourself) safe. Tell them it's the job of the grown-ups around them to protect them. Assure them that you, their teachers or caregivers, and the other adults around them care about them and will do everything possible to keep them safe. Tell your kids that a lot of people are thinking about safety and working hard to prevent more violence.

Be available; let your children ask questions. It may be tempting to say, "Everything is fine. We're far away from the explosions and nothing will happen to us." But that can sound dismissive to your child if you aren't also addressing his specific concerns. The best thing you can do is listen to his questions and continually reassure him. If you're at work during the day, give your child the number and let him call you whenever he's worried about something.

Ask your children what their biggest fears are, and encourage them to talk about them. If they're having trouble articulating them, consider these common fears after a disaster or tragedy, and try to address them even if your children don't mention them specifically:

- ◆ The event will happen again.
- ◆ Someone they care about will be injured or killed.

- ◆ They will be separated from the family.
- ◆ They will be left alone.

Keep in mind, too, that it's also common for children to express concern for people they don't know. Be supportive of these concerns.

Play with children who can't talk yet. If you have a child who is too young to ask detailed questions or express his feelings, that doesn't mean he isn't fearful or worried by the atmosphere around him. To help a young child express his feelings get on the floor and start playing — puppet shows, drawing pictures, and reading books can help small children get those emotions out. If your child draws pictures and then wants to tear them up, that's okay. It's a perfectly natural, physical way to deal with frustration and anxiety.

You might also consider setting up a play situation where your child can scare you. "If you then act really scared but in a lighthearted way, he'll be able to laugh about seeing someone bigger in a vulnerable position," family therapist Alison Ehara-Brown says. "This will help him regain a sense of power and allow him to work out his fears."

Get back to your family routine as soon as possible. Children of all ages thrive on routine. It doesn't make sense to pretend that life is normal if your family has been deeply affected by large events, but the groove of their daily lives — dinner, bath, reading time — can be tremendously reassuring to children. If your children are home from school for one or more days, try to keep them on a weekend schedule of meals, playtime, etc.

Consider how you can help. Children can regain their sense of power and security if they feel they can help in some way. Right now, the best thing you can do is follow instructions. In the coming days and weeks we'll learn more about what's needed. It may be food or clothing donations, blood, or even financial support. Asking your children to gather some old clothes, toys, or food and packaging it up together will give them a sense of helping others that will go a long way toward making them feel better.

Important Information Concerning Referrals from Child Care Networks

Providing parents with referrals is a very important part of the service we provide to the community. Referrals are given not only to our subsidy parents, but to any parent who may be searching for quality childcare in Chatham County as well. Parents will also receive information on what to look for in determining quality childcare and what standards are used in the star rating system. Parents may also be given additional information on other community services that may assist them in meeting the needs of their family.

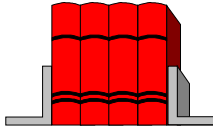
Providers are welcome to call in and update their status on openings, rates, and education or to include other information relating to the facility that may be helpful to parents. Only providers (centers or homes), who are licensed in Chatham County will be referred to. We do not recommend facilities, only refer to them. It is ultimately the parent's decision where to place their child(ren) for care.

If you have any questions concerning your information in our database or referrals, please call at 919-542-6644, extension 22.

-Nina L. Eaddy



CHILD CARE NETWORKS RESOURCE LIBRARY FEATURE OF THE MONTH



This month's feature: **RATTLE BALL**

This soft terry ball makes an excellent first ball for baby. Play catch; its bright colors and jingling sound as it is moved will attract baby's attention and the soft texture makes it easy to grasp. This soft toy is for ages 0-6 months. Rattle Ball will jingle when baby grabs it and moves it around. It is made of soft terry cloth material in three basic bright colors. It is easy to grab and machine washable.

Our Resource Library is available to Chatham County child care providers. To check out items, call Brenda Foxx at 542-6644, extension 16 or Marilyn Grubbs at extension 21. We may be able to deliver items if you have trouble coming to pick them up.

Items in the Resource Library were purchased with funding from the Chatham County Partnership for Children.



In addition to the training listed here, we have information about workshops in nearby counties sponsored by other agencies. Call Marilyn Grubbs at 542-6644, extension 21 for this information.

CPR AND FIRST AID



CPR or First Aid classes are taught by Sue Morrow, RN, monthly at Child Care Networks. Here is the upcoming schedule:

- October 2 CPR \$22
- November 27 First Aid \$15
- December 3 CPR \$22

All classes begin at 6:00 p.m. at our office, 117 E. Salisbury Street in Pittsboro. **Call Brenda Foxx to register for classes. Register early, since classes fill up quickly.**

CHATHAM CAREGIVERS ASSOCIATION

Well, it doesn't seem possible, but we are ready to get back into the swing of things once again. Hope you all had a great and safe summer and are ready to join your fellow childcare providers for our monthly meetings.

We will be holding our September 20 meeting at Central Carolina Community College in Conference Room I at 6:30 p.m. Pittsboro Providers will provide dinner. If you are not familiar with our meetings, they are informal and usually end at 8:30 p.m.

The September meeting will be an open meeting with no guest speaker. We want to take this opportunity to discuss any ideas or problems anyone might have in regards to children. Since I am a member on the Focus on Childcare Committee I will bring any news from that meeting and share that with you. If you have any concerns or ideas I would be more than happy to take that back to our board for you.

We have scheduled a guest speaker for our October meeting from Frank Porter Graham. Since we hold our meetings one month in Pittsboro and the next in Siler City we will be holding this meeting at the Family Resource Center in Siler City. Watch the Chatham Record for the date of the October meeting. If you have any ideas for upcoming meeting or guest speakers or topics for discussion that you would like to have at a meeting just let myself or Linda Elkins know of this, and we will try to accommodate.

Hope to see you all there and here is to another successful year in childcare. If you have any questions or comments please give me a call at 542-1801(work #) or 542-0084 (home). Linda Elkins can be reached at 898-4133.

-- Karen Martin

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