



INFORMATION FROM CENTACARE

In this time of bush fires, drought, floods, and now the COVID-19 virus, the anxiety levels of school-aged children are heightened when they hear something about these issues on the news, through social media or when they hear people talking about it. The following information offers advice on how parents and caregivers can best handle these issues with children that are old enough to understand the potential threat.

It feels like there has been an overwhelming number of recent tragedies, disasters and loss of life, which are being reported in the media and subsequently entering into our everyday conversations. We know that children absorb information from the news, social media, and discussions adults have around them and so it is particularly important that parents and caregivers are aware of the potential impact that ongoing exposure to this information is having on our children.

What can we do to help protect our children from events that are out of our control? Firstly, it is important as parents and caregivers to be aware of our own thoughts and feelings in relation to information we are hearing in the media. Be mindful of how much you are exposing yourself to constant streams of negative information, which can heighten our own levels of anxiety. Avoid reading social media posts that warn of an apocalypse and don't get drawn into doomsday discussions. Be mindful of how you talk in the presence of your children. Stick to the facts and rely on scientific sources for your information to help you maintain perspective and manage your feelings positively.

While we can only do our best to limit what our children see and hear at home, they will inevitably get information from a range of sources that may not always be reliable. However, research shows that being open and honest with children is the best way to help them cope with serious situations. Talking with your children about news and current events will help them to better understand what is happening, rather than imagining the situation to be worse than it actually is. Sharing information shows that you trust and value them, which can enhance their resilience. Try not to overload children with too many details. Give them small amounts of information, allow them time to process it and then ask if they have any questions.

Provide opportunities for your children to express their thoughts and feelings and correct any thoughts or ideas that are exaggerated or inaccurate. Let your child know that media exposure or hearing adults talk about worrying events might lead to heightened feelings of fear and apprehension and that this is normal and that these feelings will subside. Provide positive, reassuring messages, that you are doing everything you can to look after them and keep them safe.

For more information on how you can support your child's mental health and wellbeing, please see beyou.edu.au

***Melinda Tabone,
Clinical Psychologist,
Centacare Bathurst***