

Addressing School Safety and Media Exposure with Your Kids

As a parent, it is natural to want to protect your child from scary news, like school shootings or other violent events. But with smartphones and social media, most kids hear about these events anyway. Instead of avoiding the topic, you can talk about it in a calm, direct way. This helps your child process fear and understand what they see and hear.

How school safety concerns impact kids

Worry about school safety is common. A survey by Pew Research found that 57 percent of U.S. teens fear a shooting could happen at their school. While these events are rare, the fear they create is real. Your child's feelings are valid. Talking about these concerns can help them feel more secure.

Talking to your child

If your child sees a news story that upsets them, start by asking gentle questions like:

“How does this make you feel?”

“What have you heard about this from friends?”

Listen closely. This helps you correct misinformation and understand their fears.

For younger kids, keep explanations simple. You can say, “Schools have safety plans to protect students, and teachers are trained for emergencies.” Answer questions honestly, but avoid scary details. Your goal is to help them feel heard and supported.

Reducing anxiety through preparation

Make sure your child understands school safety procedures without feeling scared. Review drills calmly and explain that these plans exist to keep everyone safe, just like fire drills. Remind them that teachers and school staff are there to protect them. Encourage them to speak to a trusted adult if they ever feel unsafe.

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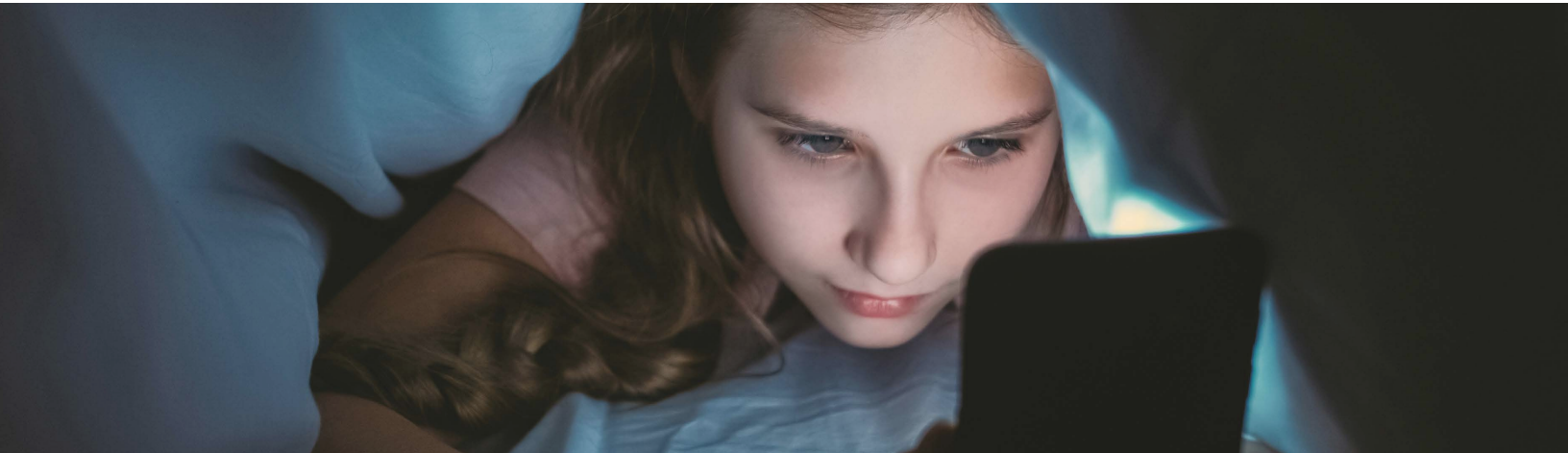


57% of U.S. teens worry about the possibility of a school shooting happening at their school.

Pew Research Center

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Managing social media use

Kids see a lot online, and some content can be upsetting. Setting healthy boundaries can help:

- Use parental controls to limit violent or graphic content
- Check in often about what they see online and how it makes them feel
- Set screen time limits and create technology-free zones, especially before bed
- Make a family media plan to guide phone and internet use
- These steps can reduce stress and help kids feel more in control.
- Reassuring your child while staying informed

You do not need to pretend violence does not exist. Instead, give your child perspective. Let them know schools, teachers and local communities work hard to keep students safe. Stay informed by attending school meetings, talking with staff and reviewing safety plans. When you feel prepared, you can better support your child.

Reactions after a school shooting

If your child has been directly affected by a school shooting, you may see changes as they cope. These can include:

- Trouble focusing
- Irritability or defiance
- Changes in sleep or appetite
- Anxiety
- Difficulty separating from caregivers

These reactions are common after a traumatic event. If your child continues to struggle or their symptoms affect daily life, contact a mental health professional who specializes in trauma.

#BackToSchool #StudentMentalHealth

If you or your kids need help with mental health at school, you can contact the [National Alliance for Mental Illness](#) by calling 1-800-950-NAMI (6264) or text NAMI to 62640.

Reviewed by Medical Director, Doctor of Medicine and Director of Clinical Operations.

