# Talking to children after a frightening event

1. Find out what they know and correct any misconceptions.

Children do hear things on the news, on the playground and they may not fully understand what has happened. Find out what they know and then you are able to explain gently and in an age appropriate way so they can have some understanding of the situation. Encourage questions and answer as honestly as you can without causing distress. Think of the age of the child and their potential level of understanding.

2. Express feelings

Feelings are important. There may be a whole range of feelings around a frightening event from sadness to anxiety to anger. Encourage your child to express how they feel about an event and don't be scared of expressing your feelings too. Don't hold back the tears if you feel sad. Children need to see it is ok to let your feelings out. Use drawing or puppets to help children express their feelings.

3. Shield very young children from disturbing images on the TV

There is absolutely no need for children to see scary and frightening images on TV. This is something that does need shielding from your children. They will not understand and it could cause a lot of fear and anxiety. Shielding images and news on TV is not shielding them from what has happened. You can explain that to them in a truthful and age appropriate way.

4. Risk Assessment

Children are often scared that this might happen to them. Look at risks in life and how likely or unlikely things may happen. There are many things we do each day that carry more risk than a terrorist attack or a disaster. We just hear about them more on the news so it seems like a real threat and that it might happen anytime.

5. Routines, routines, routines

Keep to your child's normal routines and don't change them. Children feel safer when things carry on as normal.

6. Could you help?

Is there something you could do to help all those people? Could you plant something in their memory? Could you raise money by baking or crafting? What could you do to help?

7. Worries

Put a worry box in the classroom or your home. Encourage your children to write down any worries they have and put them in the box. You can talk about them later. Always help a child address their worries no matter how trivial they may seem.

8. Negatives into Positives

Focus on the 'Helpers'. All those people who rushed to help when there is a disaster of some sort. There are far more good and kind people than bad people. Are they good and kind people? Would they help? Encourage your child to be a good, kind and helpful person just like those who helped in the disaster.