



May 25th, 2022

Dear parents & guardians,

Yesterday the families of Uvalde Texas experienced unfathomable loss and inconsolable grief. It should never happen, and yet we revisit this tragedy again and again. No other nation experiences this kind of habituated violence towards its children. It is clear that our society must do more if we are to succeed at ending it.

As we grapple with this sobering challenge, it is essential that we support our children process what they may hear about the terrible events in Uvalde, and other towns across America, and help them cope with that devastating knowledge. Parents, teachers and counselors across the country are confronting this issue today, as our children wonder what it all could possibly mean.

The [National Association of School Psychologists](#) developed the following guidance for discussing these issues with children:

- **Reassure children that they are safe.** Emphasize that schools are very safe. Validate their feelings. Explain that all feelings are okay when a tragedy occurs. Let children talk about their feelings, help put them into perspective and assist them in expressing these feelings appropriately.
- **Make time to talk.** Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their feelings readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. Some children prefer writing, playing music or doing an art project as an outlet. Young children may need concrete activities (such as drawing, looking at picture books or imaginative play) to help them identify and express their feelings.
- **Keep your explanations developmentally appropriate.**
 - **Early elementary** school children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that their school and homes are safe and that adults are there to protect them. Give simple examples of school safety like reminding children about exterior doors being locked, child monitoring efforts on the playground, and emergency drills practiced during the school day.
 - **Upper elementary and early middle school** children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what is being done at their school. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and community leaders to provide safe schools.
 - **Upper middle school and high school students** will have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence in schools and society. They will share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. Emphasize the role that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (e.g. not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.), communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.
- **Review safety procedures.** This should include procedures and safeguards at school and at home. Help children identify at least one adult at school and in the community to whom they go if they feel threatened or at risk.
- **Observe children's emotional state.** Some children may not express their concerns verbally. Changes in behavior, appetite and sleep patterns can also indicate a child's level of anxiety or discomfort. In most children, these symptoms will ease with reassurance and time. However, some children may be at risk for



more intense reactions. Children who have had a past traumatic experience or personal loss, suffer from depression or other mental illness, or with special needs may be at greater risk for severe reactions than others. Seek the help of a mental health professional if you are at all concerned.

- **Limit media viewing of these events.** Be aware if the television is on in common areas, as developmentally inappropriate information can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children. Adults also need to be mindful of the content of conversations that they have with each other in front of children, even teenagers, and limit their exposure to vengeful, hateful and angry comments that might be misunderstood.
- **Maintain a normal routine.** Keeping to a regular schedule can be reassuring and promote physical health. Ensure that children get plenty of sleep, regular meals and exercise. Encourage them to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Additional resources include:

- [Responding to School Violence: Tips for Administrators](#), from the National Association of School Psychologists
- [Helping Children Cope with Terrorism](#) from the National Association of School Psychologists
- [Talking with Children About Tragic Events](#), from the Dougy Center
- [Supporting Your Child in Stressful Times](#), flyer from SCOE (English/Spanish)
- [National Parent Hotline](#) at 1-855-427-2736 to get support from a trained Advocate.
- [California Youth Crisis Hotline](#) at 1-800- 843-5200 for further resources and support.

Harmony staff are actively working to improve our safety plans and campus security. Unknown to us at the time, Harmony staff was meeting with a security vendor just hours before the tragedy in Texas unfolded. We are currently soliciting contracts for security improvements and are working with local law enforcement on a site safety assessment to guide our work.

We are here for you. If you have concerns or would like support for your child or family, please contact the school office at 707-874-1205. We have counseling and other wellness services and resources available.

Our hearts are with the families and staff of Uvalde. May we have the fortitude and compassion to end this violence for current and future generations.

Sincerely,

Matthew Morgan
Superintendent – Principal