
I N S I G H T S

FOR FAMILIES



Help your child understand what they see on the news



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INSIGHTS FOR FAMILIES is provided by your child's school in recognition of your role as a partner in education. Insights is produced by Marcia Latta, communications consultant, .

Local and national news coverage is not child friendly, but children are exposed to news stories on television, the Internet radio, newspapers and magazines. With a 24-hour a day, seven days a week news cycle, it is difficult — maybe impossible — to shelter your child from stories about natural disasters, tragedy, crime and war.

Children who hear about devastating topics in news coverage are likely not mature enough to handle the subject matter. According to CommonSenseMedia.org, “No matter how old your kid is, threatening or upsetting news can affect them emotionally. Many can feel worried, frightened, angry — even guilty. And these anxious feelings can last long after the news event is over.”

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry adds that children and adolescents who are repeatedly exposed to violent content may imitate what they see. They may also become desensitized to aggressive or violent behavior or become more violent or aggressive.

Guidelines for helping your child consume age-appropriate news coverage:

- Adults can help children understand what they see and hear by watching the news together. You will be there to ease any fear the stories may cause, and you can provide a context for stories that are difficult to understand. You can also help them judge the credibility of the information.
- Monitor — and limit — the amount of time children spending surfing the Internet or watching television.
- Watch your child's emotional state. Signs of fear and anxiety include sleeplessness, fears, anxiety, bedwetting, crying, expressing fear. Make sure to talk to your child about his or her feelings. Reassure them that they are safe. Talk to your child about their feelings.
- News coverage is not appropriate for children under 7. Experts say young children should not be exposed to negative stories that may scare them.

Age-appropriate news sites for kids:

The best news content for children is news that is produced for children. Here are a few age-appropriate news sites:

Nick News with Linda Ellerbee: news.nick.com

Scholastic News: teacher.scholastic.com/activities/scholasticnews

Time for Kids (online and in print): timeforkids.com

For more information:

Common Sense Media: commonsensemedia.org/advice-for-parents/explaining-news-our-kids#tip_0

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: aacap.org/galleries/FactsForFamilies/67_children_and_the_news.pdf