



Talking to Your Child About Safety

Grades K - 2

Talking to your child about new safety drills at school is important and necessary. Below are general tips for talking to students in grades K - 2.

When using a sensitive, developmentally-appropriate approach to discussing safety with your child, it is unlikely that he or she will exhibit signs of distress. However, should you observe the following symptoms in your child, consider talking to your pediatrician or mental health provider:

- Changes in behavior, such as increased irritability, anger, crying, or worry
- Regression in previously mastered skills, including toileting, sleeping, or self-care difficulties or excessive clinginess toward parents or teachers
- Refusal to go to school
- Trouble concentrating or paying attention
- Increased physical complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches)

- Practice what you plan to say ahead of time.
- After a brief explanation of a safety-related issue, let your child take the lead. Ask your child what questions he or she has and provide simple, age-appropriate answers (ideally in 1 to 2 sentences). Avoid providing too many details or alerting them to all possible sources of danger at school and in our communities.
- The most important thing for a young child to know is that if there is an emergency, they need to follow directions from trusted adults to keep them safe.
- If your child shows concern, help him or her to identify/name their feelings, let them know it is okay to feel scared or worried, and weave in positive or hopeful messages (e.g., “You are feeling scared or worried. That is normal and makes sense. It is okay to feel that way. Your teachers and I are here to keep you safe and you can talk to us anytime if you feel scared.”)
- Be sure to communicate to your child that most people are good or nice and that school is a safe place. Work with your child to identify “helpers” or people he or she can go to in various settings for help.
- Create a safety plan as a family and review it to prepare for emergencies.

Examples of How to Introduce School Shooting Drills

Your teacher told me that you are going to start doing “safety” drills or lessons at school. That means you and your class are going to start practicing how to stay safe if there is an emergency at school. You may be learning things like how to run or hide. Emergencies or other scary things don’t happen a lot, but you need to practice these exercises or drills so that you know what to do if one does happen. The most important thing to know is that your teachers, helpers, and other grown-ups in charge are there to keep you safe at school. If something scary happens at school, you need to listen to them and do what they say right away.

Resources Regarding Personal Safety:

My Body Belongs to Me
by Jill Starishevsky

I Can Play It Safe
by Alison Feigh

I Can Be Safe: A First Look at Safety book series by Pat Thomas & Leslie Harker

Watch Out! Book series
by Claire Llewellyn

Sesame Street Communities:
<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/emergency-preparedness/>

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