

## Common Questions and Answers

### ***My child is worried about another terrorist attack. What should I say?***

Be honest with your child, but also be reassuring. Tell your child something like this:

*“Being scared of another terrorist attack is normal. Many people are nervous because another attack may happen. However, everyone is working very hard to keep you, your family and your friends safe. People like the President and other leaders, the military, the police, fire department, FBI, CIA, Coast Guard, etc. They are all working together to stop another attack.”*

You might also point out that the military conflict (our attack on the terrorists) is very far away. You can also say that the President has asked all of us to be brave and go about our usual activities. The President feels safe and is doing all of his usual activities, too.

Children are often reassured by hearing that their parents and family members love them and will do everything they can to keep them safe. Older children also may appreciate discussions of the specific steps that have been taken to improve security in places like airports, public buildings, schools and sports stadiums.

(Some of this advice is adapted from the Web page by the National Association for School Psychologists.  
For more detail, see [http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children\\_war.html](http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children_war.html))

### ***My child is nervous about flying on an airplane. What can I do?***

Before a flight, talk to your child about safety issues. Let them express their feelings and fears. Tell your child that you understand why they are nervous about flying on an airplane. Point out that you would not go on an airplane yourself if you didn't think it was safe. Reassure your child about all the extra steps that have been taken to keep travelers safe (such as extra security at the airport and on the airplanes, checking out people who look or behave suspiciously).

Another good idea is to bring relaxing and distracting activities for your child to do during travel. This might be a favorite toy or doll, a portable CD or tape player, a book, a deck of cards, or a hand-held video game player. This will help them feel more secure. You can also get ideas from the activities in the other sections of this book such as “How Does Your Child Cope” (Page 16) and “Fear and Worries” (Page 24). The relaxation exercise on the next page may also help.

### ***How can I help my child feel less nervous when I'm on a business trip?***

If you travel for work, stay in closer touch with family members. You can do this by calling home or sending e-mails on a frequent basis. If you can, choose a specific time to call or send an e-mail each day you are away. You might also give your child your cell phone number, or another good number to call, if they get scared or worried.

While you are away, make sure your child stays active with lots of activities. You might also give your child a project to finish before you get back, such as drawing a poster or completing a list of chores around the house. Spend some extra time with your child when you return, and do a fun activity together.

## **How can I teach my child to relax?**

### ***Use the Turtle Technique***

Talk to your child about what turtles do when they feel scared. Tell your child that turtles go into their shells to calm down. Say that he or she can also create a shell to relax in when feeling mad, scared or stressed. Your child can create a shell by doing any of the following: Putting his or her head down, going to a quiet corner or a separate room, or just closing his or her eyes. Once your child is in his or her shell, it is important to relax. Here are some things that can help:

- 1) Sit in a comfortable position, with feet flat on the floor.
- 2) Take a couple of deep breaths; feel your stomach go in and out like a balloon
- 3) Count to ten or twenty very slowly.
- 4) Imagine something you really enjoy, such as sitting on the beach in the sun, or floating on water, or some other positive, calm image.
- 5) Remind your child that he or she can practice before sleep or when nervous or scared.

## **How can I tell when to seek professional help for my child?**

It is a good idea to seek the help of a mental health professional when either your child has a number of stress reactions (see Page 14) that don't seem to be getting better or going away, or your child is so bothered by the terrorist attacks or related events that he or she is having a very hard time in school, at home or with friends.

\* This advice applies to adults as well. If your stress reactions persist or interfere with your everyday functioning, you should seek professional help.

## **How do I explain to my child why I choose to stay a part of the Fire Department?**

Only you know the answer(s) to this question. Each individual has his or her own reasons for choosing to be a member of the Fire Department. Below are some talking points that may help you explain some of your reasoning to your child.

- To be a member of the Fire Department is an honor and a privilege that I worked very hard to obtain. Very few people pass the difficult written and physical tests. I am proud to be a part of the Fire Department.
- I like to help others. Being a member of the Fire Department means that I get to help people and save lives everyday. There is no better feeling than to help others who are in need and cannot help themselves.
- This is not just a job, it is something I enjoy and want to do. The people I work with are like a family to me, and we protect each other. I hope that when you grow up, you enjoy your job and the people you spend your day with as much as I do.
- My training and experience allow me to be a member of the Fire Department, but it is your willingness to share me with the city that makes it possible. Thank you for your understanding and support, and for allowing me to do what I love to do.

## **What should I tell my child about the reasons for the terrorist attacks?**

Many children want to know why the terrorists attacked the United States and why they dislike Americans. These are not easy questions to answer, and the answers can be complicated. Many people have their own beliefs and feelings about the attacks and the reasons behind them. Only the terrorists really know the answers to these questions.

What we can give you are some “talking points” to use with your child that may help you answer questions about the terrorists and their attacks. These are only suggestions; it is up to you to decide how you want to discuss these questions with your child.

### **Why don't they like us?**

There are many reasons why the terrorists do not like Americans or the United States, including:

- They do not like our way of life because it is very different from theirs.
- The terrorists do not believe in freedom or democracy.
- The terrorists do not believe that women should be free and take part in government, business or society.
- The United States was built on freedom and democracy, and since the terrorists do not like these ideas or our way of life, they do not like Americans or the United States.

### **Why did the terrorists do this?**

- You can explain to your child that most people accept or at least tolerate differences.
- The United Nations (U.N.), for example, tries to resolve conflicts and differences that people and countries have with each other in a peaceful way. The United States belongs to the U.N.
- The terrorists do not accept or tolerate people who are different from themselves, and do not choose to solve their conflicts peacefully.
- The terrorists are “extremists.” They use extreme methods, such as violence and terrorism, to hurt those whom they do not like or who are different from them.
- The terrorists thought that by attacking the United States, we would change the way we live and become more like them. They were very wrong.

### **Why did we go to war?**

You might discuss with your child that:

- The people who did the bad things must be stopped.
- We have gone to war against the terrorists to make sure that another attack like September 11 does not happen again.
- We must punish the people who committed these acts. Just like a criminal who goes to jail for committing a crime and hurting people, the terrorists must be punished for their crimes and for hurting so many people.
- It may help to explain that the September 11 attacks were not the first time the terrorists had attacked Americans or American interests (e.g., the bombing of the USS Cole a year ago, bombings of the U.S. embassies in Africa, etc.).
- We have to fight to protect Americans and American interests everywhere.

## *Where Can I Find Additional Assistance?*

**[www.nyc.gov/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/fdny)**

This website has great information about the NYC Fire Department; specifically the Family Assistance Unit – designed to meet your needs – and the Counseling Service Unit - for any help.

**You can also contact the Family Assistance Unit at:  
(718) 999-1473**

**Or any questions can be answered by calling the  
Counseling Service Unit at:  
(212) 570-1693**

## *Some Helpful Websites*

### **Project Liberty Web Site**

Information on Project Liberty services and resources. Links to web sites devoted to children's issues.  
**[www.projectliberty.state.ny.us](http://www.projectliberty.state.ny.us)**

### **New York State Office of Mental Health**

*Age Related Reactions of Children to Disasters*

**[www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/crisis/crisiscounseling3.html](http://www.omh.state.ny.us/omhweb/crisis/crisiscounseling3.html)**

### **American Psychological Association**

Various materials for parents and children and links to other sites.

**[www.apa.org/psychnet/coverage.html](http://www.apa.org/psychnet/coverage.html)**

### **National Association of School Psychologists**

*Children and Fear of War and Terrorism: Tips for Parents and Teachers*

**[www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children\\_war.html](http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children_war.html)**

### **National Institute of Mental Health**

*Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters*

Contains in-depth information on Trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder **[www.nimh.nih.gov/outline/responseterrorism.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/outline/responseterrorism.cfm)**

### **Public Broadcasting System**

*A Guide to Children's Grief by Kenneth J. Doka*

**[www.pbs.org/wnet/onourown/terms/articles/children.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/onourown/terms/articles/children.html)**



## **FDNY COUNSELING SERVICES UNIT LOCATIONS**

The FDNY Counseling Service Unit (CSU) provides services to all personnel, including family members. Appointments for individuals, couples, family and phone counseling are available **Monday – Friday from 8am to 6pm and Saturday from 10am to 4pm**, except where indicated. Outside referrals are also available.

### **MANHATTAN**

251 Lafayette Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10012  
**(212) 570-1693**  
**24-Hour Phone Line**

### **FORT TOTTEN, QUEENS**

Fort Totten, Building 413A  
Bayside, NY 10314  
**(718) 352-2140**

### **STATEN ISLAND**

1688 Victory Boulevard  
Staten Island, NY 10314  
**(718) 815-4111**

### **BRENTWOOD, SUFFOLK COUNTY**

Crooked Hill Road  
Brentwood, NY 11717  
**By Appointment**  
**(631) 851-6888**

### **ORANGE COUNTY**

St. James Episcopal Church  
1 St. James Place (at S. Church St.)  
**Goshen, NY 10924**  
**Monday and Thursday 10am–6pm**  
**(845) 294-5716**

### **PUTNAM COUNTY**

Church of Holy Communion  
1055 Route 6  
Mahopac, NY 10541  
**By Appointment**  
**(845) 294-5716**

### **ROCKLAND COUNTY**

Don Basco Retreat House  
Marian Shrine  
Willow Grove Road  
Stony Point, Rockland  
**By Appointment**  
**(845) 294-5716**

**[www.nyc.gov/fdny](http://www.nyc.gov/fdny)**

## *How Can I Help?*

Every person is unique, and has different talents or things they are good at doing. Think about your talents and the things that you do best. Then think of a creative way to use your talents to help others and support America. For example, we, the authors of this book, used our talents to create *Helping America Cope*, which is our way of fighting terrorism and helping those in need. Helping comes in many ways and forms. You should do what you can to help, but stay within your limits. If you cannot help financially, find another way, such as writing letters of support, volunteering your time or services, or creating a poster or mural showing your support.

### **How can I help fight terrorism and support America's troops overseas?**

Many people have been asking how or what they can do to help fight terrorism. The fact is, everyone in America is already helping. By simply going to work or school, and resuming your normal, everyday activities, you are helping America fight back against terrorism. You can also help by showing support for our country and our military personnel overseas. You can do this by:

- Displaying the American flag or yellow ribbons in front of your house or on your cars.
- Creating "patriotic" T-shirts and hats expressing your support of our country and troops.
- Writing letters of support to your local military offices, police and fire departments and Congressional representatives, thanking them for their assistance in fighting terrorism.

### **My child and I want to do something to help those in need. What can we do?**

Those who have been personally affected by the attacks need our support and help. Helping others, especially those in need, can help you and your child cope with your feelings as well. Here are some ideas for what you can do to help those in need.

**Adults:**        Donate money  
                      Donate goods  
                      Donate services  
                      Give blood  
                      Volunteer your time (for fundraisers and community projects)

You can also help by assisting your child in their activities, such as coordinating fundraising activities like bake sales and car washes, assisting in transportation, mailing letters of support, etc.

**Children:**     Donate money  
                      Donate goods  
                      Volunteer your time (for fundraising activities, community events)  
                      Write letters or send drawings to those affected by the tragedy or to those who are helping keep us safe (firefighters, police, etc.)

**Fundraising:** Fundraising can be fun! Use your talents and creativity to help raise money for those in need. For example, if you're a good cook, hold a bake sale. If you like to make lemonade, have a lemonade stand. If you're a good artist, paint pictures and sell them in your neighborhood. You can even organize a car wash or school carnival to raise money. The ideas are unlimited!

## Questionnaire For Parents

We are interested in hearing your thoughts about this book and the New York City Fire Department. Please complete the questionnaire below and send it back to us. Your evaluation and thoughts will help us produce better material in the future.

**Please use the following scale to rate your experiences using this book.**

- | Strongly Disagree   | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|----------|---------|-------|----------------|
| 1   | 2        | 3       | 4     | 5              |
| 1. The information in the book was helpful.   |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 2. The parent activities were informative.  |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 3. I have felt better about things since using the book.                                  |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 4. The child activities were constructive and easily understood.                          |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 5. The joint parent-child activities created a safety net for interaction and discussion. |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 6. My child has felt better about things since using this book.                           |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 7. I would recommend this book to other parents.  |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 8. My overall evaluation of the book is positive.   |          |         |       | 1 2 3 4 5      |
| 9. What have you liked most about the support you have received?                          |          |         |       |                |

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10. What needs would you like to see addressed by the Fire Department?

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11. Additional comments:

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**Please mail to:**

The Other Side of the Firehouse  
251-Laffayette Street, 3rd Floor  
New York, NY 10012