

It's incredibly important for parents to have open and supportive conversations with their children about school violence. Here are some ways to approach the topic and questions you can ask:

General Approach for Parents:

1. **Choose the Right Time and Place:** Find a calm, private moment when you and your child aren't rushed or distracted. This could be during a car ride, at dinner, or before bedtime.
2. **Be Calm and Reassuring:** Your demeanor sets the tone. If you're anxious, your child might become more anxious. Reassure them that their safety is your top priority and that schools and adults are working hard to keep them safe.
3. **Listen More Than You Talk:** Allow your child to express their feelings, fears, and questions without interruption. Validate their emotions, even if they seem irrational to you.
4. **Keep it Age-Appropriate:**
 - **Younger Children (Elementary School):** Focus on safety procedures (lockdowns, fire drills), the role of trusted adults, and the idea that adults are there to protect them. Avoid graphic details.
 - **Older Children (Middle/High School):** You can have more in-depth discussions about safety protocols, reporting concerns, and the importance of looking out for one another. Acknowledge their access to news and social media, and help them process information.
5. **Focus on What They Can Control:** Empower them by discussing safety drills, reporting suspicious behavior, and knowing who to go to if they feel unsafe or have concerns about a peer.
6. **Avoid Making Promises You Can't Keep:** Don't promise that "nothing bad will ever happen." Instead, focus on the measures in place to keep them safe and the low likelihood of such events.
7. **Follow Up Regularly:** This isn't a one-time conversation. Check in with your child periodically, especially after news events or drills, to see how they're feeling.

Questions Parents Can Ask Their Child:

- **To open the conversation:**
 - "What have you heard about [recent event/school safety]?"
 - "How do you feel when you hear about things like [school violence]?"
 - "Are there things about school safety that you worry about?"
 - "What do you think about the safety drills we have at school?"
- **To understand their knowledge and feelings:**
 - "What do you know about what to do if there's an emergency at school?"
 - "Who are the adults at school you feel safest with or would go to if you had a problem?"
 - "Do you ever talk about school safety with your friends?"
 - "Is there anything that makes you feel unsafe at school, or anything that makes you feel really safe?"
- **To encourage reporting and awareness:**

- "What would you do if you saw or heard something at school that made you feel worried or unsafe?"
- "Do you know how to report concerns anonymously, if you needed to?"
- "What do you think 'see something, say something' means, and why is it important?"
- "If a friend was struggling or talking about concerning things, what would be the best way to help them?"
- **To assess their emotional well-being:**
 - "How do you feel when you go to school each day?"
 - "Are you sleeping okay? Are you having any bad dreams?"
 - "Has anything at school been bothering you lately?"
 - "Is there anything you want to talk about that we haven't covered?"

Remember, the goal is to create a safe space for your child to share their thoughts and feelings, and to reinforce that you are there to support them.