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Talking to Children About Tragedies in the News

Parents may find it difficult to talk to their children about such tragedies as natural disasters, school shootings, or terrorist attacks. An underlying message to convey is, "it is ok if this bothers you; but we are here to support each other."

A good place to start is by asking what a child has already heard. Listen carefully and ask what questions they have. Be honest, but do not feel that you have to share every detail. Avoid speculation. Also listen for misinformation and underlying fears.

The following tips are ways to help your child cope:

- Be a calm presence.
- Reassure your child of his or her safety.
- Maintain the routine.
- Spend extra time together.
- Encourage your child to express his or her feelings.
- Do something to help survivors and their families.
- With younger children, try not to show media coverage; discussion may work best.

Some children may have a more difficult time than others, and may not cope as well. Signs of concern may include sleep problems, physical complaints (headaches, stomachaches, tired), regressive behaviors, or mental health concerns (sadness, heightened anxiety, depression).

Our pediatricians and mental health counselors are here if you are not sure your child is coping well and needs additional assistance.

Marijuana Risks

Marijuana (cannabis) is readily available to our teens in Colorado. We know from our interviews with our teen patients that usage runs the gamut from never, to experimentation, to occasional, to daily.

Below we list adverse effects that could occur with recreational cannabis use. **These are based on studies where there is "substantial" research evidence. Also, be aware that in persons under age 25, these effects are significantly more serious.**

- Cannabis use is associated with increased risk of motor vehicle crashes.
- Cannabis users, particularly those under 25 years old, can develop cannabis use disorder.
- Young users are more likely to be addicted to illicit drugs in adulthood.
- Frequent users are more likely to have memory impairment.
- Intoxication may cause dose related acute psychotic symptoms.

- Frequent cannabis use is associated with the development of schizophrenia.
- Frequent smoking use is associated with chronic bronchitis.
- Cannabis smoke may be associated with lung cancer.
- Cannabis crosses the placenta and into the fetus of a pregnant woman. It also passes into breastfeeding infants.

We know that many teens will experiment with marijuana, and, except for occasional very short term effects, will probably have no lingering effects. (Although they should not drive). But we ask parents, especially those who are frequent users, to discuss the possible long term effects of cannabis usage with their children, and to explain why frequent usage under age 25 could be even more serious.

We are all entitled to our own opinions on this subject, but not our own facts!

Vehicle Child Restraint Tips

We often get questions about when to use different child car restraints. Here are some answers.

Rear-facing car seats with a 5-point harness should be used in children up to age 2, or until a child reaches the maximum weight for the car seat. These should always be in the back seat.

Forward-facing car seats with a 5-point harness should be used until a child reaches the maximum height and weight for that seat, regardless of age.

Booster seats with both lap and shoulder belts should be used after a child outgrows the car seats. These should still be in the back of the car. These should not be used with lap only seat belts. It is recommended that children stay in these until they are 57 inches tall.

Seat belts should be worn for those over 57 inches tall. The lap belt should be across the hips and the shoulder strap should be comfortably crossing the shoulder between the neck and arm, and never behind the arm or back.

Be sure all seats are properly installed! Studies show that up to 75% are not!

This and That

Parker Pediatrics has been Parker's most comprehensive pediatric practice for 36 years!

Our **schedule** is now open through the **summer**. Call now for an appointment.

We will again be awarding two **scholarships to graduating seniors** who plan to go into the healthcare field. Applications are on our website.

Allergy patients—now is the time to start your antihistamines and nasal sprays, before symptoms get bad.

We want to remind our families that we are open **Saturday mornings** for acute care. Our phones go on for appointment requests at 8:30 am.

We also want to remind families although **urgent care centers** are convenient, they are often staffed by medical personnel poorly trained in pediatrics.

Our office is also equipped to handle **emergencies**, as we do wound care, burn care, and injury care.

We will be **repainting** most of our office this spring. Work should be done evenings and weekends.

We now have **texting** available for those who wish to use this method to ask our phone triage nurse a question. Just text us at our main number, **303-841-2905**. We strive to return all calls within two hours. This service is available only when our office is open and is not checked when we are closed.

“Quotable Quotes”

The following conversations occurred in our office.

Provider: “What kind of vegetables do you like?”

5-year-old: “Pancakes.”

A 7-year-old said after she received a throat culture:

“It’s a good thing I don’t have two throats.”

Dr.: “What does a cow say?”

2-year-old: “Moo.”

Dr.: “And what does a zebra say?”

2-year-old: “Hey!”

19-year-old, when asked shy she was being seen, “I’m coughing up my tonsils.”

Dad, who was checking in a sick child, “I’m bringing you a very sick child. I would like a healthy one in return.”

4-year-old: “Your hands are freezing.”

Provider: “Cold hands are clean hands.”

4-year-old: “And hot hands are...really, really hot.”

If you enjoy these quotes, you can purchase Dr. Rabinowitz’s book, *Cute Kidbits: Funny Conversations Kids Share With Their Pediatrician*, on Amazon or at our office.

Food Insecurity

One in six families with children in our state struggle to afford healthy food. This can lead to malnutrition, developmental delays, behavioral problems, depression, and obesity.

Hunger Free Colorado is a statewide nonprofit organization that connects families to food resources so that no Coloradan goes hungry. Their number is **855-855-4626**. Any parent that answers yes to the following question should consider calling them for a confidential referral. **“In the past 3 months have you worried about whether your food would run out before you got money to buy more?”**

During our health supervision exams, we will be asking families that question, and if affirmative, we will assist you in a referral to the Hunger Free Hotline.

No child should ever have to go hungry.