

SAFETY MEASURES AND GUIDELINES SUGGESTED BY EARLY CHILDHOOD ASSOCIATION FOR SCHOOLS
KEEPING IN MIND THE MHA ALERTNESS FOR SAFETY IN SCHOOLS.-

Given that children must be hearing and seeing visuals about the terrorist attack in a school, given below is a circular that can be sent to parents sensitizing them about the same and ensuring that teachers too are sensitized about handling questions and anxiety in children post the attack.

SAFETY MEASURES AND GUIDELINES TO KEEP CHILDREN SAFE

1. THOROUGH CHECKS- Under supervision of security officer and supervisor, ensure that alertness and checking of the following is done at regular intervals
 - a. Trees
 - b. Roof tops
 - c. Extended areas
 - d. Dust bins
 - e. Isolated areas
 - f. Periphery of buildings
 - g. Play area
 - h. Parking area
 - i. Any other suspected areas
2. PATROLLING- Approaches, connecting roads, surrounding area and security guards will patrol school complex frequently. Or place CCTV cameras that are monitored.
3. SECURITY ROUNDS- Security officer to make frequent rounds and must remain on move most of the time. Look for suspicious activity of strangers or baggage or packages left unattended.
4. SECURITY CHECKS-

Keeping safety in mind safety of children the following should be done-

 - I. Baggage and Purchase items- Items coming from outside / going from inside will be thoroughly checked by concerning authorities at the entrance and exit.
 - II. Security staff will check display of Identity Cards- Each employee. All parents, servants, drivers entering the building to have ID cards issued and stamped by the school office.
 - III. Prevent by Alertness- Not only security but total staff should remain alert. Any visitor or person roaming in the premise without a valid ID card should be reported immediately.
 - IV. Only authorized people should pick up children. If school does not know the person who has come to pick up then do not hand over the child. Phone the parents.
5. SECURITY OF BUSES-
 - a. Day Parking and Movement (parking area and school premises)-Proper security, locking of bus to be maintained. No bus to be left unattended. Thorough check of the bus (inside, underneath and roof area) should be done by transport and security staff before children board the bus.
 - b. During Movement-No unauthorized individuals to be allowed to enter the bus.
 - c. Night Parking-Proper check, locking, and security procedure to be maintained.
6. CCTV-Constant monitoring of activities and detailed analysis of the information can be carried out by school security officer. Daily report of the same should be generated and forwarded to higher authorities.
7. IMPORTANT TELEPHONE NUMBERS- of Police, Fire Brigade, Hospitals, School and management to be made available at important locations.
8. MOCK DRILLS- To deal with any contingency, mock drills to be concluded quarterly in all schools. Lecture cum demonstration by Fire Brigades and Police will be organized for firefighting and security action plans. Evacuation area to be the safety point and to be available for use in case required.
9. THREAT CALLS- if received by the school should be viewed seriously. All checks to be carried out. Inform local police station immediately.
10. FEAR PSYCHOSIS- All efforts to be made to control panic by ensuring staff are kept updated about everything. Staff to be trained and made alert about any such emergency contingency. Staff to lead from the front till all kids are safe.
11. SECURITY AUDIT- additionally you can call the local police to conduct a security audit of your school and follow guidelines given by them.

12. STAFF SCREENING AND VERIFICATION- it is of utmost importance that all staff like teachers, office staff, peons, bais, drivers, and securityguards are screened with a thorough police verification process before employment. Keeping in mind the present danger scenario we recommend that all staff are immediately verified for any criminal records if any.

13. SUPPLIES AT SCHOOL- Keep important supplies at school incase children or staff need to be kept overnight.

SAFETY INCASE OF A TERRORIST ATTACK IN THE CITY

1. If the terrorist attack happens in your area do not panic. Stay calm.
2. Do not send children home, keep them indoors.
3. Preferably keep the children in the room that is in the interior of the premise.
4. Make the security guard very alert by giving instructions.
5. No strangers to be allowed in the premise.
6. Increase your supervision in and around the center.
7. Call the police for security help.
8. Listen to the radio bulletins to keep yourself informed.
9. Close the main gate, main door, and windows for security purpose.
10. Do not let children play in the outdoors at all.
11. Follow instructions if any, received from police or other security personnel,
12. Call the parents and ask them to pick their child from the school after situation is under control.
13. Keep the children occupied with some activities.
14. Hand over the child to no one else except the parents unless specific instructions from the parent received and teacher to also confirm with the parent over the phone before handover.
15. Teachers not to leave the premise until all the children go home.
16. The Principal/Headmistress to go home after all children and staff leave.
17. Use the school transport to drop the staff off at home.

WHAT CAN TEACHERS DO ? TIPS FOR TEACHERS ON HANDLING ANXIETY AFTER AN ATTACK IS REPORTED IN NEWS-

- First and foremost cope with your own natural feelings of fear, anger and helplessness. Until you do this you won't be able to help children much.
- Start the healing process. Help the children feel relieved and soothed.
- Identify children who need the intervention of mental health professionals or other helpers beyond the classroom.

TECHNIQUES TO HELP CHILDREN COPE AFTER THE TERRORIST ATTACK WHEN CHILDREN RESUME SCHOOL

The teacher uses the TALK METHOD OR DRAWING METHOD to help children cope with TERRORIST ATTACKS.

ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP TEACHERS USE THE TALKING METHOD

TO DIFFUSE CHILDREN.

- The child tells a story.
- Use puppets to tell a story.

- Have an open discussion.
- Use pictures to facilitate discussions.
- Use a video to start discussions.

TEACHER TO NOTE THAT SHE SHOULD BE IN THE GUIDING ROLE AND NOT IN A ROLE OF “CONTROL” OF THE DISCUSSION

ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP TEACHERS USE THE DRAWING METHOD TO DIFFUSE CHILDREN.

REMEMBER, drawing should be given to the child as an optional activity and not as a compulsion.

- Draw/write a book together.
- Drawing as a collective group activity.
- Draw aspects of the event-positive ones. (people, places, activities)
- Create a COLLAGE.

TEACHERS TO NOTE THAT :

- THE GOAL SHOULD BE TO DRAW A PICTURE OF EXPRESSION RATHER THAN “A PRETTY PICTURE”
- The DRAWING ACTIVITY should end with the child discussing the picture drawn with the class.

REGARDING THE RECENT TERRORIST ATTACK IN A SCHOOL, CHILDREN IN OUR SCHOOLS MUST BE HARBORING FEAR ABOUT IT AS THEY MUST BE SEEING IMAGES ON TELEVISION AND NEWSPAPERS, USE THIS CIRCULAR TO HELP PARENTS UNDERSTAND HOW TO HELP CHILDREN COPE.

Dear Parents,

What has happened in the past few days is indeed tragic and has definitely left scars on all of us. But the children will be the most affected by this constant talk, visuals, and discussions that they knowingly or unknowingly are exposed to. You may say that 'I do not allow my child to be exposed to news channels'; that is good, but you never know where he will be exposed to facts and 'blown- out- of- proportion-facts'. It can be in the school bus, at the playground, at a friend's house, on the radio or in the classroom, or in the newspapers. Your children are going to be affected by all this, and hiding facts from them or not answering their questions will not be the right way to handle this, it may only make matters worse for them.

It is time for our own 'sanitization' and 'sensitization' instead of 'sensationalism'. Its time to do the following with our children-

Let's begin with sanitization- removing any left over fears, doubts lurking in their minds-

1. Do not allow your child to be knowingly exposed to visuals of such violence. If you are watching a news telecast that is about the violence then take the time to explain in very simple language what he is seeing and reassure him that he is safe.

2. While explaining do not use phrases like- 'These are naughty boys just like you have in your class', or, 'See, this is why mummy tells you not to be a naughty, then you will grow up to be like them'. All this will only worsen the trauma and damage your child's self esteem, self-confidence and dent his/her self-image.
3. Be very careful that you do not discuss related events in front of your child. Even if you think he/she is busy playing with his/her toys or is happily watching a kid's channel, they are focusing on you all the time. So be extremely careful.
4. Your children should not hear you say- 'I am scared, what if this happens to me tomorrow?', or, 'What if this happens in my child's school?' This will only increase the fear psychosis in your child.
5. Give more paper, crayons, and color pencils to your child, and say. 'O.k. draws something for mummy/daddy.' (don't tell them what to draw) After they have finished drawing, ask them, probe them about the drawing and you will be amazed how much of the deadly events will feature in his/her drawings. This is the best way to probe out what he/she is thinking or feeling and then reassuring him/her and making him/her feel reassured.
6. Refrain completely from telling your child that he/she is a 'scared cat' or a 'sissy' or 'are you a girl?' It is all right to be afraid. Your child is stronger if he/she is able to talk about his/her fears.
7. Some children may bed wet, start getting scared of the dark, will be clingy, and refuse to leave you alone or even start nail biting. Understand, accept, and slowly reassure them.
8. Working parents can call them at home more often if they feel that the child is unduly upset. Tell them about where you are and that you are safe, this will reduce their worry. Children get worried too about their parents!
9. Use play therapy to help gain an insight in what is going on in your child's mind; drawing, block play or doll play are some forms of play in which we come to know about the emotional upheaval going on in their minds.

Let's use this time now to sensitize ourselves and our children for the future- some ways to sensitize children-

1. Violence has become an accepted way of life for our children, they are exposed to it all the time, and hence it is imperative that parents and schools do not condone any kind of violence or violent activities. When your child watches glorified violence with you (in a blockbuster movie) he understands that violence makes my parents happy, and so he will always resort to violence to solve any situation in life. Instead teach him conflict resolution.
2. Do not teach children to 'hit back'. When children are taught this at a very young age, they use 'hit back' for all their life's frustrations- most terrorists are hitting back at society.
3. Do not gift guns to your child; a child idolizes his/her parents and when he/she receives a gun as a gift from them, he/she is somewhere getting a message that guns are fun and this is the first step towards violence acceptance.
4. Many parents ask – 'Our kids say that the police also use guns', so we gift our children guns so that they idolize the police and the army. This is incorrect, guns are unsafe and should NOT be given to children, either at *Diwali* or *Holi* or otherwise. And parents must become strong and tell them that the police and the army first had to undergo a long process of training, then they got their gun license and are using it, just like you cannot drive a car and we can, because we are old enough to and have a license.
5. Expose children to good stories, stories that talk about values like honesty, fun, freedom, non-violence, and helping others. Search out such books from bookstores. Make a conscious effort to expose your child to such stories that will enhance your child's life skills. Schools should do so too.
6. Children learn by imitation- so learn anger management so that your children look at you and learn how to deal with stress and all such angry emotions.
7. I am sure a lot of analyzing will be done of a terrorist's mind to understand that how such young boys are being led on such a destructive and inhuman path, but most of the time the prime focus of all such acts is 'achievement'. So don't create an atmosphere for your child where he/she learns that achievement is foremost even if got by ill deeds and lying and aggression. Teach your children to accept failure and to rise again. Build this confidence in your children, especially our youngsters and adolescents.
8. If your child is an adolescent or a youngster, communicate with them instead of lecturing all the time, listen instead of asking all the time, invite his/her friends home instead of denying him/her. And discuss current issues with your youngster to understand how he/she is coping with it and to delve into his/her thoughts, so that you can undo any thinking that you feel is bad for him/her and his/her future.

Let's remember it is our children and our youngsters who are our future, let's take care of them. Let's make this world a safer place for our children.

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