

[NASP Statement Regarding Terrorist Attack in Manchester, England](#)

As the news of the events in Manchester, England unfolds, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) would like to express our sadness and shock at the horrific act of terrorism at the Ariana Grande concert. Our thoughts go out to everyone affected by this tragedy.

Intentional acts of violence that hurt innocent people are frightening and upsetting. When such acts occur at concerts, festivals, or sporting events, perceptions of safety and security will be challenged, particularly when they involve children and youth. Ms. Grande's popularity among young people combined with the immediacy of modern media can create a sense of close connection to the event among youth here in the United States. Many young people will experience a range of emotions including sadness, anger, fear, and anxiety.

Families and educators can support children by establishing a sense of safety and security, helping children to process their thoughts and feelings, and placing the event in the proper context.

Additional [tips](#) include the following:

- Monitor social media use. Help children understand that constant use of social media can be anxiety provoking and may expose them to traumatizing images.
- Be attuned to children's knowledge of the event and their potential reactions. Be available to talk and listen. Let their questions be your guide on if and how much to focus on the tragedy.
- Provide accurate reassurances regarding the possibility of terrorism in their community. The odds of being the victims of such an event are very low.
 - Maintain normalcy and routine while being flexible to children's needs.
- Let children know it's okay to have many different feelings and there is no one right way to respond.
 - Provide ways for children to express emotion, such as journaling, writing letters, talking, art, or music.
 - Focus on resiliency as well as the compassion of others.
- If questions arise about what to do if caregiver and child become separated during an event engage the youth in conversation about reunification planning. For example, agreeing upon a safe meeting location where the child should wait for a parent or other caregiver.
 - Identify the various ways in which people are helping; emphasize the ability to do good.
- Keeping in mind that children's questions should be your guide, the following offers guidance on having developmentally appropriate conversations with children and youth.
 - ✓ Early elementary school children need brief, simple information that should be balanced with reassurances that the daily structures of their lives will not change. Provide concrete examples of safety measures that are being implemented each day at home, at school, and in the community to help keep them safe.
 - ✓ Upper elementary and early middle school students are more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe. They may need assistance separating reality from fantasy or false reports. For many, their perceptions of safety will be strongly influenced by social media. It is important to help them become educated consumers of the news, provide limits around the

- amount of time they are exposing themselves to graphic images, and encourage them to reach out to a trusted adult if they are unsure or anxious about what they are hearing.
- ✓ Upper middle school and high school students have strong and varying opinions about the causes of violence and threats to safety in schools and society. Some may express anger, judge others by the actions of those they perceive as similar to the perpetrator(s), or want to retaliate. It is important for adults to help these students process their emotions and provide healthy coping strategies. Students may also share concrete suggestions about how to make school safer and how to prevent tragedies in society. They will be more committed to doing something to help the victims and affected community.

As always, it is extremely important to reinforce for children and youth that lashing out at others in response to an act of violence is never an appropriate response. Schools in the United States have seen a rise in harassment, bullying, and hate crimes related to high profile events, and there is a risk of unfairly stigmatizing people who are perceived to resemble a perpetrator because of their race, language, religion, or the way they dress.

Bullying and harassment are never acceptable, but they can be particularly damaging when certain students or segments of society feel especially vulnerable. Families and school personnel need to prevent and intervene quickly and effectively in the presence of abusive behaviors toward any students. Such behaviors can only further contribute to the risk of violence in schools and communities.

Adults can help children understand the importance of treating all people with dignity and not judging entire groups of people for the actions of a few. In addition to modeling compassion and acceptance of differences in their own words and behavior, adults can highlight examples of musicians, artists, athletes, and other public personalities who are reinforcing messages of compassion and hope.

For additional information and resources to help support children and youth, visit www.nasponline.org.

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