Fast FAQs: How to talk with kids about scary things
-Summary-

How to start the conversation?
One of the simplest ways to start the conversation about scary things is to just ask. You can say something like:

"There are a lot of changes going on in the world right now. How are you feeling about it? I know it can make me feel scared sometimes."

5 Tips:
• Let them talk
• Don't save them from their feelings
• Give them facts
• Make a support plan
• Set limits around media time

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1) Let them talk and give them space to share what they're thinking and feeling.

2) It's normal for adult humans to want to jump in and save kids from being upset - but experiencing uncomfortable feelings is one of the ways we learn to manage them.

3) Help them reframe their story to fill in any holes or gently correct any misinformation. If a child is nervous about people getting ill during the pandemic, focus on what you are doing as a family to limit the risk…like wearing masks as needed, and washing hands.

4) Make a plan listing what the child can do when they feel afraid, or nervous. This can help give them a sense of control while they learn to take responsibility for their emotions.

A few examples of things to put on the plan would be:

-Talk to someone you trust
-Remember what you're doing to stay healthy…things like washing hands, etc
-Pick a calming activity and do it for 30 minutes…read a book, draw a picture, listen to music

5) Limit exposure to upsetting reports, photos, or videos is essential in reducing the stress kids experience (and the same goes for adults, too).

Discuss with them the need to NOT look at new or social media in the evening, especially in the hours before bed. There is also a difference between watching cat videos or playing Animal Crossing and social media or news sites.

Not all screen time is created equal.