

How do I explain a major public incident to my child?

The events that have occurred at Westfield Bondi Junction are difficult to understand and reconcile for adults and children alike. Having to explain such a situation to a child is often met with concern and trepidation. Explaining a major public incident to a child requires sensitivity, honesty, and age-appropriate language. Consider the following:

1. **Prepare Yourself:** Take some time to reflect on your own feelings about what has occurred prior to speaking with your child. Remaining calm and composed is important in your messaging to your child what has happened.
2. **Choose the Right Time and Place:** Find a quiet, comfortable environment where you and your child won't be interrupted. Make sure it's a time when you both have plenty of time to talk. Using a quiet activity to work on together gives the opportunity for engagement in something else whilst discussing the situation. This assists in the child's comfort level in hearing the information.
3. **Use Simple Language:** Tailor your explanation to your child's age and maturity level. Use simple and clear language that they can understand. Avoid using scary or graphic details of the situation.
4. **Provide Reassurance:** Let your child know that they are safe and loved. Reassure them that it's normal to feel scared or confused after such an event and such an event is out of the ordinary and not a daily occurrence.
5. **Encourage Questions:** Invite your child to ask questions and express their feelings. Listen carefully and validate their emotions. Answer their questions honestly, but only provide as much information as you feel that they can handle.
6. **Focus on Coping Strategies:** Teach your child healthy coping strategies to deal with their emotions, such as talking about their feelings, drawing, or spending time with loved ones.
7. **Emphasise Support Networks:** Remind your child that they have people they can turn to for help and support, such as family members, teachers.
8. **Monitor Their Reactions:** Pay attention to how your child reacts to the conversation. Be prepared to provide ongoing support and reassurance as needed.



9. **Follow Up:** Check in with your child regularly to see how they're doing and if they have any additional questions or concerns. Let them know that it's okay to talk about their feelings at any time.

Every child is different, and their reactions to events will also differ. It is important to be patient and flexible in your approach.

If you would like support in scripting the appropriate messaging, reach out to the Centre for Corporate Health to speak with a psychologist. Make a booking via the Resilience Box App by scanning the QR code below, or call us on 1800 959 956.

