

How to Talk to Your Kids About Graphic Violence Online



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It seems like there's no escaping seeing violent images online, whether you're looking for them or not. What can parents do about tweens and teens who might come across this disturbing content?

"By the time children reach middle school, they may have watched as many as 8,000 murders and 100,000 other acts of virtual violence through the media," the American Academy of Pediatrics [reported](#).

[According to](#) Deborah Gilboa, a family doctor and resilience expert, "How [parents] handle the conversation is less about age and more about what you know of your child and how likely they are to be impacted by the events," via TODAY.

If you aren't sure if your child has seen a graphic video, Gilboa told parents to simply ask. If they haven't, she suggested saying, "There is a video of it and it's pretty hard, gross and scary. If you haven't seen it, I'm really glad, because I can't see what good it does."

If your child did see the images, try asking questions like, “What did you think about the video? How did it affect you?”

“Parents can decide, ‘What do I want my kid to remember about this event — what’s the lesson here?’” Gilboa explained. “It’s an opportunity to enforce values that matter to you.”

Gilboa also let parents know that, if your children have seen any disturbing content, the damage isn’t permanent.

“Tell your kid, ‘You get to pick what you keep watching,’” she said, telling parents to tell their kids to scroll past graphic videos on TikTok or Instagram For You pages, or to let friends know they’re not interested in having violent videos or images sent to them.

For any children who might feel very affected by things they’ve seen online, Gilboa recommended visualization exercises, like creating pleasing mental pictures, art therapy and prayer.

“It is extremely important that people use their beliefs in a way that makes them feel empowered and hopeful,” Thomas Plante, PhD, a professor of psychology at Santa Clara University, [told](#) the American Psychological Association. “Because it can be remarkably helpful in terms of managing stress during times like these.”

Graphic, violent content can feel inescapable online, and it can be upsetting for kids and adults alike. While these images can’t be unseen, Gilboa’s tips can help parents help their children work through these feelings and avoid seeing this content in the future.