

# Children and Fear of War and Terrorism Tips for Parents and Teachers

National Association of School Psychologists

## Emotional Responses

Emotional responses vary in nature and severity from child to child:

- **Fear:** Fear may be the predominant reaction--fear for the safety of those in the military as well as fear for their own safety.
- **Loss of control:** Lack of control can be overwhelming and confusing. These feelings were experienced by most people in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks.
- **Anger:** Anger is a common reaction. Unfortunately, anger is often expressed at those to whom children are closest.
- **Loss of stability:** War interrupts routines. It is unsettling.
- **Isolation:** Children who have a family member in the military, but who don't live near a military base, may feel isolated.
- **Confusion:** This can occur on two levels. First, children may feel confused about terrorist attacks and war, what further dangers might arise, and when the violence will stop. Second, children may have trouble understanding the difference between violence as entertainment and the real events taking place on the news.

## What Can Parents and Teachers Do?

1. **Acknowledge children's feelings**
2. **Help children to feel personally safe**
3. **Help children maintain a sense of control by taking some action**
4. **Pay special attention to children who may feel isolated**
5. **Expect and respond to changes in behavior**
6. **Keep adult issues from overwhelming children**
7. **Coordinate between school and home (notify school if family member is called to duty, family members should be notified if child showing signs of stress at school)**