

Tips for Talking with Children

Telling children about a parent's injury may be difficult, but it is the first step toward helping them understand and cope. It's best to tell your child as soon as possible. Children, no matter how young, sense when something is wrong and will become frightened if they don't know what has happened. How you talk with your child about a parent's injury will depend on the child's age and ability to understand the injury, your own emotional state, and the emotional and mental state of the injured parent.

Here are some tips for finding the right time to talk with your child:

- **Talk with your child as soon as possible after the injury has occurred.** It's natural to want to protect children by withholding bad news, but children can sense from adult behavior when something bad has happened and will become anxious without knowing why.
- **Explain what happened when you feel you can be calm and there will be no disruptions.** Children take cues from a parent's behavior. Whatever the child's age, sit down and talk at eye level. If you talk calmly about the injury, your child will be better able to understand what has happened and what has changed.
- **Use language your child can understand** and *don't provide details* to a child who isn't ready to hear them.
- **Protect your child from hospital trauma.** It is important to prepare your child before visiting the hospital. Check the hospital's website as it may have information or resources on preparing your child and avoiding exposure that can unduly frighten them.
- **Reassure your child** that the injured parent is receiving the best of care, and provide examples.

For more detailed information on talking to children about war injuries and/or preparing children for hospital visits, go to: www.CourageToTalk.org.



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*CSTS is a partnering center of the Defense Center of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury, and
A component site of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network*