

## **Talk with Your Kids About What's in the News**

Children of all ages are exposed to current events when the TV is on, when the radio is playing in the vehicle, when news stories are streamed on a phone, and by overhearing adult discussions. Lately we have heard daily reports on the Larry Nassar case in which many elite female gymnasts have testified about the sexual abuse that he inflicted on them as preteens and teenagers when he was their team doctor.

We may hope that a younger child is not paying any attention to the bad news being shared, but they are catching bits and pieces no matter how hard we try to shield them from the negative stories. And with their inability to really understand all of the words and situations, they are often coming to the wrong conclusions about what it all means.

A child may worry more than normal that something bad will happen to them. He or she may come to the conclusion that not participating in sports, gymnastics in particular, is the only way to be safe.

What is a parent to do?

Having good, open communication with your child is very important. Most current events are good things for a child to learn about in order to understand the world. If frequent conversations about current events are normal in the home, a child will feel comfortable bringing up any topic with his or her parent.

A parent can use the news as an opportunity to talk with their child about a difficult subject in an age-appropriate manner. The conversation can relate the topic to the child's world, give strategies to avoid harm, and provide reassurance that Mom and Dad will keep them safe.

In the six years that Southeast CASA has been providing advocacy for abused and neglected children in our area, there have been some cases involving child sexual abuse. It does happen in our corner of the world, so it is important for parents to take steps to keep their children safe.

There are many challenges in parenting, and discussing uncomfortable topics with a child is necessary in order for them to feel secure and

protected in the world. Forewarned is often forearmed. Kids ARE hearing the news reports, so let's do what we can to ease their concerns and confusion by talking with them in an honest, but appropriate manner.