

# Talking Points for Children (Preschool to Elementary)

## 1. "Our school building/home is gone because of a fire, but we are still a family."

### What to Say:

- "Something very unexpected happened to our school building/home — there was a fire, and it's no longer safe for us to use. But what makes a school/home special isn't just the building. It's the people — your friends, your teachers, and everyone who cares about you. We're all still a family, and even though our building/home is gone, we'll find a way to stay together."

### Why It's Important:

- Children often associate school/home with a physical space and a place of safety and comfort, so it's important to shift their focus to the **people and relationships** that make up the family and community. This reassurance helps them feel that the most important aspects of school or home — friendships, teachers, memories, and routines — remain intact.
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## 2. "It's OK to feel sad, worried, or confused. Grown-ups are working hard to make sure we're all safe and to figure out what happens next."

### What to Say:

- "It's normal to feel all kinds of emotions right now. You might feel sad about losing your classroom/home, worried about where you'll go to school, play, sleep, eat or confused because things feel uncertain. It's OK to feel that way. Everyone has big feelings when something unexpected happens. But you don't have to figure it out on your own. There are lots of grown-ups working hard to make sure you and your friends have a safe place to learn and play."

### Why It's Important:

- Kids need **permission to feel** their emotions. They may experience sadness, confusion, or anxiety, but they often need reassurance that **they are not responsible** for fixing the problem. Emphasizing that **trusted adults** are handling the situation helps them feel secure.
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### 3. "Even when things change, the people who care about you — your teachers, friends, and family — are still here."

#### What to Say:

- "Sometimes things change, and that can feel scary. But even if our school/home looks different, the people you care about — your friends, your teachers, and your family — are still here for you. The grown-ups around you are going to make sure you stay connected to the people who matter most."

#### Why It's Important:

- Children often fear **losing connections** when faced with uncertainty. Emphasizing **relationships over spaces** helps them understand that even if their physical school or home changes, their relationships can remain strong.
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### 4. "We can't always control what happens, but we can control how we take care of each other and help each other through it."

#### What to Say:

- "Sometimes big things happen that we can't control — like the fire. But what we *can* control is how we take care of each other. We can help each other feel better by being kind, checking in on our friends, and sharing how we're feeling. When we work together, we feel stronger and braver."

#### Why It's Important:

- **Empowerment is key** during uncertain times. By focusing on **what children can control** (like kindness, communication, and community), they can regain a sense of stability and self-agency.
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### 5. "We're going to figure out what happens next — one step at a time."

#### What to Say:

- "Right now, we don't have all the answers about where you'll go to school or what our new home will look like. But we're going to figure it out, step by step. You don't have to know everything right now. The grown-ups are here to help you through it."

### Why It's Important:

- Kids thrive on **structure and predictability**, and uncertainty can be distressing. Acknowledging that things are unknown, but **reassuring them that plans are in progress**, can help reduce anxiety.
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## How to Help Kids Process the News Through Activities

Here are **interactive activities** that parents, teachers, or caregivers can use to help children **express emotions and find comfort** after hearing the news.

### 1. Drawing Their “School Family”

Have the child draw pictures of the people they care about in their school family or nuclear family — teachers, friends, or other staff. Parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents.

#### Prompt:

- "Even though the building/home is gone, who are the people who make you feel like part of a school family/your family? Let's draw them!"

#### Why It Helps:

- This activity helps children shift their focus from the physical building to the **relationships that remain intact**.
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### 2. “Big Feelings Jar”

Create a "Big Feelings Jar" where kids can write down or draw any emotions they're feeling about the situation.

#### Prompt:

- "Let's write down the big feelings you have right now. It can be anything — sad, mad, confused, or even hopeful. We'll put them in the jar, and we can talk about them when you're ready."

### Why It Helps:

- **Naming emotions** helps children feel validated and reduces anxiety by giving them a safe space to express their feelings.
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### 3. "What Makes a Home?" Discussion

Discuss how **a home is more than a building**, just like a school is more than a building.

#### Prompt:

- "A home is more than just walls and a roof. It's where we feel loved, cared for, and connected. Our school is the same way. Even though the building is gone, the love and connection we have with our school family are still here."

### Why It Helps:

- This metaphor helps kids **reframe their loss** and focus on the **emotional connections** that remain.
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### 4. Resilience Badge Craft

Have children make a "Resilience Badge" to remind them that they are strong and can get through difficult times.

#### Prompt:

- "Sometimes, big things happen that we can't control. But you are brave, and you can get through it. Let's make a special badge to remind you how strong you are."

### Why It Helps:

- This **empowers children** by focusing on their **inner strength** and resilience.
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### Additional Support for Parents:

## What Parents Can Say When Kids Ask Hard Questions:

- **Q: "Will I see my friends again?"**

*A: "Yes, we're going to make sure you stay connected to your friends. We'll figure out a way to keep everyone together."*

- **Q: "Where will I go to school?"**

*A: "We don't know yet, but the grown-ups are working really hard to find the best place for you to keep learning and having fun."*

- **Q: "Why did this happen?"**

*A: "Sometimes unexpected things happen that we can't control, like a fire. But what's most important is that everyone is safe, and we will figure out what happens next together."*