

## Helping Little Ones Understand BIG World Topics

Acts of violence are all around us – on TV, video games and sometimes just around the corner from home. Understandably, children are afraid of what might happen to them. Tackling these tough topics and reassuring little ones that you are there for them can be extremely challenging and valuable at the same time.

[Mental Health America](#) suggests parents validate their child's feelings and encourage them to express their concerns through talking, drawing or playing so you can talk through the issue. It can also calm children to know the family's safety plan including where they should go for help if their trusted adults aren't near.

Experts say it sometimes helps children prevent nightmares and fall asleep more easily by finding creative ways to use their imagination. That's what Malala Yousafzai did as a young girl when terrorists took control of her neighborhood in Pakistan. In fact, she wished for a magic pencil that she could use for simple things like drawing a lock on her door to keep her brothers out to more difficult concerns like erasing war, poverty and hunger. She even wrote a book about it called, [Malala's Magic Pencil](#).

In reality, Malala couldn't erase the bad things that scared her most but she could use a real pencil to write words of encouragement to other girls who were in the same situation. She wanted them to stand up for what they believed in and to have the right to go to school without fear.

You can learn more about Malala and her family at The Children's Museum in a new addition to the [Power of Children](#) exhibit this September. It will include an immersive recreation of her home in the Swat Valley in which kids can play house while learning about the Pakistani culture and learn about the significance of objects and photographs from her life. "We know these sort of spaces foster family conversations and can really be a gateway to family communication, which we know in turn leads to learning," said Jennifer Pace Robinson, executive vice president, The Children's Museum. John Goodson, humanities gallery interpretation manager added, "There are powerful things children can do—even at a young age—with their parents help, "Inspire and encourage children of any age to seek out injustices and inequities in the world and help them understand how they can make a positive difference." Just consider what Malala said when talking about how access to a quality education for all people can help, "One child, one teacher, one book, and one pen can change the world."

Parents can talk to their child to show how their choices and actions can make a difference. Just pick a topic that interests them. For example, develop some ideas together on how to help animals. "Children can write letters or make phone calls to animal shelters to see what they need. Families can make flyers together, make cards to deliver to friends asking for donations such as blankets, toys, or food. Let the child take ownership every step of the way with parental guidance and support. It is also valuable to follow up and reflect with your child to see how it went, what they enjoyed and what would they do differently next time," said Susan Michal, educator, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

This helps teach positive social skills to little ones while also giving them confidence to feel like they have more control in scary situations.

The Power of Children exhibit is recommended for children 8-years-old or older, adults are encouraged to provide context in simple ways.