

Talking to Your Children About Community Unrest



Answer questions your children ask in a timely, honest and direct manner. Be honest if you don't have the answer, and offer to find the answer together.

It is usually best for children to get information directly from their parents. Consider reaching out to children who are not asking questions to discuss what is happening, to learn what they think and how they feel about the situation. Children who go to school, communicate with people outside of the home and/or who watch TV may hear information about unrest in the community. Lack of information and not giving “permission” to talk about things can encourage fear and misunderstanding.

It is helpful to directly acknowledge what your children have to say. It may seem silly, but rephrasing and repeating what they said to you about important issues shows the child that you listened and understood what they are trying to convey. Acknowledging their feelings can encourage a child to open up and talk more.

The following are tips to help you communicate effectively:

- Talk with your child at a level they can understand.
- Be honest when sharing your feelings. “It scares me a little too, but we are safe and I am going to take all possible precautions.”
- Offer realistic reassurance.
- Be prepared to address tough questions.
- Your child may ask you not to go to work. Acknowledge their concern and explain your decision for continuing to work. For example, “I know you are worried. I am going to continue doing everything I can to keep myself safe.”
- Encourage your children to talk with you and let you know how they are feeling whenever they like.
- Offer physical reassurance — hugs and spending time together may relieve some of their concerns.
- Continue to use your parenting skills, knowledge of your child and family traditions to reaffirm your love for one another and offer support and comfort.