

Tips for Parents and Caregivers: Talking to Youth about Community Conflict

As a caregiver, you are very important in your child's life and are counted on to help him or her understand what is going on when bad things happen. Recent events between police and community members can be upsetting and confusing for both adults and children. When children see and hear about conflict near their schools and homes, they can have many feelings such as anger, sadness, and fear. Talking things out with adults, especially parents can help a child cope with upsetting events in a positive way.

Some ideas to help your child:

- Try to offer time to talk about concerns about what is going on. It may help to start the talk with questions like, "Do you have any questions about what is happening in our community?" Some children may not be ready to talk and may feel more comfortable showing what they are thinking and feeling through drawing or acting things out.
- Consider the age of your child when answering their questions – use fewer words and keep it very simple for younger children and have more back and forth discussion with middle and high school students, answering questions they may have. Let him or her know that you like the questions. It is okay to say that you don't know the answer.
- Let your child know what you and others are doing to keep them safe and how they can help be safe.
- Develop a safety plan with your child and family about what to do if they are not feeling safe, such as who they can talk to feel better and picking a place to meet if they are separated in an emergency.
- Praise your children for sharing their feelings and let them know that what they are feeling is normal.
- Share with your child that the community conflict and actions of those involved in the conflict can be confusing for adults too and share how it makes you feel.
- Keep to your normal routine as much as possible. This can be comforting for a child. Consider having regular family meals with time to talk and a routine for homework, free time, and bedtime.
- Limit your children's television and internet viewing about the events, as the media often repeats only the most violent and disturbing images. If your children do watch, be willing to sit with them to explain what they are seeing. Watching too much violence can be especially upsetting for younger children and may lead to not feeling safe.
- Talk with your child about the positive events going on in the neighborhood and the city. Point out when you see or hear of people showing their thoughts and feelings in a healthy, caring way.
- Know what is normal and not normal for your child and ask for help from a doctor or counselor if you are worried about big changes in your child's mood, behavior, or grades or if you think your child is a danger to him or herself or to others.
- Plan some enjoyable activities with your child, including those that support the community.
- Pay attention to how you are coping with recent events and don't forget to take care of your own emotional well-being. Caregiver stress has a big impact on how children adjust to stressors.

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**Adapted from <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/handouts/revisedPDFs/talkingviolence.pdf>
and <http://www.howardcenter.org/documents/TalkingtoChildrenaboutCommunityViolence.pdf>

