



Tips for Addressing Children’s Reactions to the Election

Listen and Communicate

Let your children know that your home is a safe place to talk about post-election fears and ask tough questions. Facilitate conversations by asking questions, such as, “What are you most upset about?” or “Is there something you feel confused about?” Then, give simple, honest, age-appropriate answers without overwhelming them with information. Often, children have misconceptions about things they hear in the news and from peers. Talking allows you to quickly correct any misunderstandings.

Validate Fears

Many parents and caregivers are understandably experiencing their own fears and anxiety over the election and possible changing laws. But, even in the face of uncertainty, parents can offer reassurance through their words and actions. There is no harm in parents letting their children know that they are also afraid. In fact, honesty can further encourage children to share their own feelings.

Be Aware of Your Reactions

Parents are only human, and it’s hard to stay cool when talking about the topics brought up by this election – especially with children. But, handling difficult conversations calmly and thoughtfully is what children need to feel secure and reassured. That is not always easy. Parents who are having difficulty managing feelings about the election or responding appropriately to their children are encouraged to seek their own support or coaching when needed.

Manage Fear of Change and Maintain Routines

Children need consistency in order to feel safe. Election rhetoric about deportations and marginalization of groups can make children fearful that their lives and families will change immediately and dramatically. The truth is, if new laws and policies are made, they will take time to enact. Nothing will happen immediately. Remind your children that, if anything does change, your family will have time to plan for the future together. Reinforce that they are safe by maintaining regular home and school schedules and keeping children involved in their usual sports, arts and other recreational activities.

Limit Exposure to Media

Rhetoric in the news about social inclusion, immigration and deportations can be distressing for anyone, but especially for children. Simply turning off the television and limiting exposure to social media will help to shield your children from the negativity surrounding the election. If they do see or hear something in the news, take the time to listen and dispel any misinformation.

Be Informed

While it is helpful to limit children's exposure news, it is critical that parents obtain accurate and reliable information about any changes in laws or policy that may impact their families. Parents need resources that define the implications of any new laws, regulations and policies that could affect their family situation so they can appropriately respond to their children. Please contact CFGC's Community Resource Services for recommended resources.

Never Tolerate Bullying or Discrimination

Children may have been exposed to images of divisive, hateful and discriminatory words and actions during this election. Make sure they understand that bullying anyone, verbally or physically, is never acceptable behavior from anyone. Remind them that we are all unique, and that no one deserves to be degraded or hurt because of their differences. If your child is a victim of bullying, or if he or she sees a peer being bullied, tell them to calmly ask the bully to stop. If that seems unsafe, instruct your child to walk away and ask an adult they trust for help, such as a teacher or school principal. Let them know that they can always come to you if they are ever concerned about interactions with their peers or with adults. Also, if your child informs you of incidents of bullying at school, immediately inform school authorities so they can take appropriate action.

Empower Children

Despite images of divisiveness and hate in the media during the election, remind children that elections are meant to give people a role in government. They can be agents of change through their actions and words. Let children know that their views matter, and that our government includes checks and balances designed to give everyone a voice.

For more information about CFGC, please visit www.childguidance.org.