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# How to talk to your kids about...

*Big events in the news can be confusing and upsetting for kids — even when they don't fully understand what's happening. Children often pick up on tone, fear, and emotion long before they understand facts. The goal isn't to explain everything — it's to help kids feel **safe, heard, and supported**.*

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## First: Start with Your Child, Not the Headlines

Before explaining anything, pause and ask:

- “What have you heard or seen?”
- “How did that make you feel?”
- “Do you have any questions?”

This helps you avoid giving too much information — and lets your child guide the conversation.

## Age-Specific Guidance

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### Pre-K & Early Elementary

Keep it simple. Focus on safety and feelings.

What helps:

- Use short, clear sentences
- Name emotions: “*That looked scary.*”
- Reassure: “*You are safe. I’m here with you.*”

What to say:

“Sometimes grown-ups disagree about big problems, and it can look loud or confusing. What matters most is that you are safe and loved.”



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What to avoid:

- Graphic details
- Adult political language
- Repeated news footage

## Upper Elementary (Ages ~6–11)

Answer questions honestly — but briefly.

What helps:

- Validate feelings without escalating fear
- Let kids ask follow-up questions
- Admit when you don't know everything

What to say:

“People are protesting because they care deeply about families and fairness. Sometimes when people disagree strongly, things can get tense.”

Helpful reminder:

Kids this age may worry about “*Could this happen to us?*”

It's okay to say:

“Even when the world feels uncertain, we're paying attention and making sure our family is okay.”

## Middle School

Invite curiosity and critical thinking.

What helps:

- Acknowledge complexity
- Talk about values (justice, compassion, dignity)
- Ask what *they* think



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What to say:

“This is complicated, and people have very different opinions. What questions are coming up for you?”

Encourage them to:

- Check sources
- Notice emotional language in media
- Take breaks from nonstop news

## For All Ages: Name Feelings

Kids may feel scared, angry, sad, or confused — or all of the above.

Helpful phrases:

- “That makes sense.”
- “I’m glad you told me.”
- “You don’t have to figure this out alone.”

Younger kids may express feelings through play or drawings rather than words — that still counts as communication.

## Limit News & Social Media Exposure

Repeated images of shouting, violence, or chaos can overwhelm kids.

Tips:

- Watch news *with* kids when possible
- Turn it off when emotions spike
- Explain that news often shows extreme moments, not everyday life



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## Offer Hope and Agency

Especially for older kids, it helps to talk about:

- Helpers in the community
- Ways people support families and neighbors
- Small actions that reflect care and kindness

Hope doesn't mean pretending things aren't hard — it means reminding kids that love and goodness still exist.

## Watch for Signs They're Struggling

Kids don't always say, "I'm anxious."

Look for:

- Trouble sleeping
- Clinginess or regression
- Irritability or withdrawal
- More questions than usual

If you notice changes, gently check in and keep the conversation open.

## The Bottom Line

You don't need the perfect words.

What kids need most is:

- A calm presence
- Honest, age-appropriate answers
- Reassurance that they are not alone

Talking about hard things doesn't create fear — **silence** does.

Your steady, loving voice helps kids build resilience for a complicated world.