

How to Help Your Children Understand the Election Stress

Elections often lead to a wide range of reactions and emotions. How can we best help our children if they are feeling stressed by what they are hearing, reading, or experiencing?



Explain the Election Age-Appropriately

Hopefully parents and caregivers will be the first to talk with children about current events. Explain in simple, clear terms what is going on, using words and concepts they can understand.



Listen to What They Are Saying

Ask what they've heard about the situation. Let them tell you in their own words and answer their questions truthfully, at an age-appropriate level. It can be helpful to have this conversation during an activity like drawing or in the car.



Focus on Their Safety

Once you understand their perception of current events, be clear that you will always do your best to keep them safe. Tell them adults are working hard to make sure they'll be alright.



Pay Attention to Your Own Reactions

Your children will watch you carefully and take their cues from you. If you can manage your anxiety in response to current events, your children will be more reassured. It's okay to let them know you're anxious, upset, or concerned – but be sure to show them how you stay calm and tell them what helps you feel safe.



Monitor Access to Media

Older children and adolescents can engage in conversations with you about your reactions to what you see in the news. For adolescents, focus on positive, solution-oriented websites and messages. Ask your older children what they are seeing or hearing on social media.



Watch for Behavior Changes

Your children may show you through their behavior that they are struggling with what they have heard or seen. They may have physical complaints or regressive behaviors like nightmares or sleep problems. They may feel guilty that they are to blame, and the best thing to do is reassure them that they are not responsible.



Maintain Your Routines

Sticking to a daily structure like mealtime, bedtime, etc. can reduce anxiety and help children feel more in control. Continue to help your children understand what to expect these days. If you have familial or cultural routines that your child finds comforting, be sure to use these.



Keep the Door Open

Encourage your children to come to you with questions or concerns and do not assume the questions will stop after a few days or even a few weeks. Let them know their fears and questions are normal and you will always make time for them.



A Teachable Moment

This is a good time to impart your family values. Help children understand that our country and democracy are strong and have gone through changes for hundreds of years. Take kind and compassionate action in your community.