



TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

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HOW KIDS SHOW STRESS/ANXIETY

- Acting out, misbehaving, tantrums.
- “Playing” out situations they may have heard about or seen.
- Feeling sick, stomachaches, headaches, etc.
- Isolating or becoming quiet or avoidant.
- Spacing out, not paying attention.
- Nightmares or bad dreams.

5 TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

1. Factual information is appropriate and even necessary.
2. Age appropriate information is best, add more detail if you have older children or teenagers, otherwise keep it simple.
3. Use words and language that you and your child are both familiar with. Start by asking what they know or think about the situation.
4. Set time aside for the conversation so you can provide your full attention and your child is not distracted, plus it gives you time if they have questions.
5. Listen and ask questions, even if you disagree. It is ok to say “We think about that differently” if you and your child have different perspectives.

WHY TALK TO YOUR KIDS

- Kids and teens fill in the blanks with what makes the most sense to them, the younger they are the more inaccurate that can be.
- You control the information they get, not social media, news sources, their friends, or anyone else.
- When you talk to your kids you know what they are thinking or believing.
- You can make sure they are getting information they understand in a way they can understand it, because you know your kids best.
- Talking with your kids and being the one to start the conversation normalizes having tough conversations and you being the one your kids come to.

WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

BASIC NEEDS

Children are not always aware of the impact of their own physical needs and can be even more sensitive if:

- They are off routine.
- Are not getting enough sleep.
- Are hungry or sick.

Addressing these first or being proactive about meeting basic needs helps.

- Talk about your own feelings, this normalizes different emotions and gives permission to be upset or have emotional reactions.
- Kids and teens have different reactions to these conversations, so being open to questions or being ok if they seem done with a conversation are ok.
- Use the skills you know about managing stress. Teach your kids what you know and do these things together.
- Monitor what they are exposed to through social media and news sources. Help them to “check the facts” of the information they receive.
- Explain how you view your role and steps taken to address your safety.
- Talk to your children about how they can navigate tricky peer interactions and how they can interact with others on the topic.

AGE RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2-5 years: Keep things simple, use pictures or storybooks if available or appropriate for the topic.
- 5-10 years: Be prepared for questions, use concrete examples, such as what your child may similarly experience in school at their age.
- 10-15 years: Give more information than you think you need to, this age group typically knows more than we expect.
- 15+ years: Make time to listen and find a way to be supportive of your child’s perspective, even if you don’t agree. Ask if they want your advice or perspective, don’t just give it.