

Starting & Continuing Difficult Conversations with Youth

Talking to your children about their worries is the first step to helping them feel safe and begin to cope with the complex world around them. What you say and how you say it depends on their age, but all children need to know you are there listening to them. Give the child or adolescent in your life, your full emotional and physical presence. Listen carefully to their thoughts and point of view. When offering guidance and your point of view, do it in a way that does not dismiss their ideas. Remind them of your love, care, and your faith in them.

Watch for signs of stress, fear or anxiety.

If your child has experienced or is experiencing a difficult time in their lives, it is typical for them to have a wide range of emotions, including fearfulness, shock, anger, grief, and anxiety. They may have trouble sleeping, difficulty with concentrating, changes in appetite, and changes in mood. As alarming big emotions can be, stay calm. Encourage your children to put their feelings into words. Some children may find it helpful to express their feelings through art, such as drawing/painting pictures, telling stories, etc.

Check-in often.

Be sure to check in regularly with your children as you monitor their coping. Provide extra time, attention and patience (even an extra hug).

Keep home a safe place.

Children, regardless of age, seek home to be a safe haven when the world around them becomes overwhelming. It is important to remember that your children desire a sense of stability and calm in their home and relationships. Help make it a place where they find the safety and comfort they need. Consider adding activities and routines that promote family connection. These activities may look different for each family; it may mean regular family dinners together, for others, it may be a family movie night once each week.

Take care of yourself.

Take care of yourself and you will take better care of your children. Be a model for your children on how to manage stress and react to challenging times. Build in time for calm moments – even quick breaks can be meaningful. Take five minutes to step out of the room. Take deep breaths or a quick walk. Listen to what your body needs. As much as you're able, eat nutritious meals and prioritize a healthy sleep schedule.

Help is available.

If you or your children are feeling stuck or overwhelmed, reach out. There are many resources in your community and For All Seasons is here to help.