

TACKLING TOUGH CONVERSATIONS

As a caregiver, you will be faced many times with the task of having difficult conversations.

Those conversations could involve something happening within your family. You could also be faced with having to discuss difficult or tragic news happening in the world or your community. Or, your child might be struggling with something in their life, such as having trouble with a friend or being upset about a bad grade. No matter how big or small the issue is, these tips can help you can navigate tough conversations with the children in your life.



How to Dive Into the Difficult Topics

If a difficult or life-changing event is happening within your home or to your family, like death or divorce, you may need to be the one to approach your child and start the conversation. For other topics, such as upsetting stories in the news, it may be ok to wait for the child to come to you. In either case, it's advisable that you enter into these conversations feeling confident and prepared. **Before providing an answer or starting a conversation, take a step BACK, and follow these tips:**

Utilize the BACK Method

B

Be Open

Be open to being asked questions and open to providing thoughtful answers. This means being a good, active listener and never responding with judgment or criticism.

A

Ask Questions

Ask your child questions to understand the root of what they're thinking and feeling. Kids don't always have the best tools to communicate exactly what they're feeling or needing. It is up to you to listen and figure out what's going on. It's ok to ask questions to figure out what they already know before you potentially share more information than they needed.

C

Circle Back

Are you facing a conversation you're not sure how to respond to? That's ok! You don't have to have all the answers right away. Let your child know that you will think about it and circle back with them.

Circle-back also means checking in again after some time has passed. They might need time to process the information. Just because the conversation is over and you don't hear them mention it again doesn't mean that they aren't still working through it in their head. You can check-in by saying, "Remember what we talked about last week? I just wanted to see how you were feeling and remind you that I'm here if you want to talk."

K

Know Your Audience

When talking to your child, be sure your response is age-appropriate. This includes the language that you use and the type and amount of information you provide.



GENERAL TIPS

- Let your child know you love them and that your love for them will never change
 - Be honest, be clear, and be concrete
 - Balance your reaction and emotions
 - Resist the urge to fill the silence. Allow them time to process
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OTHER TOPICS

When and how you approach the child in your life might vary depending on the topic.



PERSONAL TOPICS: Death or Illness, Divorce, Moving, New Family Member

Tips:

- Reassure your child that their behavior had nothing to do with what happened and did not contribute to the change
 - Brace yourself for a reaction on either end of the spectrum. They could get more emotional than you anticipated or hardly react at all
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COMMUNITY TOPICS: Shootings, Hate Crimes or Speech, Pandemics, Natural Disasters

Tips:

- Look for the positives. Have your child create a short list of things they're looking forward to help them see good in the future
 - Don't feel like you need to rationalize. It's more important that you're honest about what's happening and more importantly, just listen
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