

5 TIPS FOR TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT HATE INCIDENTS

In the aftermath of threats, violence, terrorism, or other incidents of hate, how can educators, caregivers and family members give children and teenagers the tools they need to understand what has happened and take steps to challenge hate in safe and effective ways?

PREPARE YOURSELF

Before talking with children or teens, make sure you feel prepared to discuss the incident and/or topic. Provide enough time and space for them to share their feelings and ask questions. Although you may personally feel devastated by the event, when talking with young people, strive to remain calm and not overly emotional so they feel comfortable expressing their feelings.

TREAT ALL YOUNG PEOPLE'S QUESTIONS WITH RESPECT

Rather than ignoring or dismissing a question that makes you feel uncomfortable or anxious, ask yourself why you feel that way. Children will most likely sense an adult's discomfort, which may increase their feelings of fear and insecurity. It's preferable to tell children that you need to think about their question before answering. When answering their questions, keep it simple. Don't give long lectures or speak in platitudes.

BE OPEN TO TALKING ABOUT WHY THESE INCIDENTS TAKE PLACE

Young people often struggle to understand why these incidents take place. They wonder why it happened and what motivates people who perpetrate these crimes. These are difficult questions to answer and because the motivation is sometimes unknown or unclear, it is better to say you don't know rather than give a reason that is simplistic or inaccurate. Sometimes intolerance of differences and bias is at the root of the violence. Therefore, it is especially important to be careful when describing the perpetrator because we don't want to respond—out of fear—with our own stereotypes, assumptions and scapegoating.

BE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF DISTRESS IN CHILDREN

These can include withdrawal, lack of interest, acting out, and fear of attending school or other activities. You may become aware of these

concerns during the conversation or notice them later at another point when you least expect them. In addition, misinformation, rumors and bias can take place on the playground or on a smartphone so gauge what they are hearing from friends and on social media and dispel inaccurate, skewed or biased information.

FOCUS ON THE HELPERS

It is always very useful to highlight for children the people who helped the targets and their families during these incidents as well as those who supported them afterwards. Further, think together about something you might want to do to take action. This can take the form of showing you care and building solidarity with the impacted people or community (e.g. sending a card or a donation) or together, get involved in activist activities that address bias and discrimination.

DOWNLOAD ADL'S FULL GUIDE HERE:

Empowering Young People in the Aftermath of Hate

