



OCTOBER 10, 2024

KNOW! TO DISCUSS FEAR AND HATE IN THE NEWS

Recently, unfounded claims that Haitian immigrants were stealing and eating pets have been reported by both Ohio and national news outlets. Regrettably, these unfounded claims became a point of discussion during the September 10th presidential debate. As a result, residents of Springfield, Ohio, have been inundated with threats of violence, security concerns, and hateful flyers and phone calls. These remarks have turned Springfield into a focal point for anti-immigrant rhetoric, drawing attention on both national and international levels.

For many of us, processing such hateful language and threats has been challenging, and it's likely even more difficult for our youth. Nearly half of young Americans report that politics and news media negatively impact their mental health ([The Institute of Politics at Harvard University](#)). Constant exposure to hate in the news, on social media, and in daily life can weigh heavily on young minds, leading to feelings of fear, anger, sadness, and anxiety. Talking about these events with the young people in your life can help them process their emotions and find healthy ways to cope with the stress they are feeling.

Here are some helpful tips for having meaningful conversations with the young people in your life:

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF FIRST

Before starting a discussion about current events with a young person, take a minute to assess any strong feelings present. This will help avoid leading the conversation with intense emotions or political views, allowing the focus to be on the young person's questions and concerns.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF FIRST

Young people will likely have many questions, and being informed on the situation by checking reputable news sources will be helpful in answering their basic questions. Additionally, don't hesitate to decline to answer any questions due to lack of information.

ASK YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THEIR FEELINGS

Open the conversation with a question like "What have you seen on social media or on the news about what's happening in our town? How do you feel about it?" Let them guide the conversation. Listen carefully, validate their feelings, and offer insights without pushing the conversation in any particular direction. Acknowledge that it's okay to feel uneasy or scared in response to hateful speech and threats.

ENCOURAGE COMPASSION, NOT STIGMA

Recent remarks by national leaders have fueled hate, prejudice, and stereotyping. When talking with young people, avoid language that demonizes or stereotypes groups, as this can lead to prejudice. Instead, encourage compassion, respect, and a commitment to stand against hate and bullying.

Your actions have a significant impact on the young people around you. Make it a priority to model respect, both in-person and online. Keep in mind that sharing memes, jokes, or social media posts can contribute to a culture of negativity. Everyone plays a role in promoting kindness and understanding.

FOCUS ON THE HELPERS

When negativity dominates the news, it's helpful to find and share positive stories of people helping each other with acts of bravery and kindness. Encourage young people to notice the helpers in your community and become helpers themselves. Talk with them about how they might want to get involved —whether it's participating in community events, volunteering, or joining a school group that works to strengthen the community. Look for the ways that youth can be forces for unity rather than division.

SUPPORT HEALTHY COPING SKILLS

Young people need guidance in developing healthy coping skills, especially during times of widespread anxiety. Emphasize to young people that they should be kind to themselves and reassure them that it's okay to feel different. Find activities you can do together, like going outside in nature, a game night, trying new recipes, or arts and crafts that allow young people to care for themselves. You can also explore more coping ideas in [this Know! Tip](#).

PAY ATTENTION TO WARNING SIGNS

While stress and anxiety are normal responses to a crisis, they can be concerning if they start to interfere with daily life. Be mindful of warning signs such as loss of interest in usual activities, changes in sleep patterns, overeating or undereating, or difficulty focusing. If you notice these signs, consider seeking the support of a mental health professional.

By fostering open, compassionate conversations, we can help the young people in our lives navigate these challenging times and empower them to become forces of positivity and change in their communities.

RESOURCES

National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:
<https://988lifeline.org/>

Ohio Crisis Text Line: Text "4hope"
to 741 741

[How to talk to your children about hate speech | UNICEF Parenting](#)

[Talking to Teens About Online Hate Speech: A Guide for Parents and Families — Making Caring Common \(harvard.edu\)](#)



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