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KNOW! TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE MANAGE ELECTION STRESS

It's no secret that politics and elections are stressful for many Americans. More than two-thirds of registered voters in the United States say politics is a "source of stress" for them (1). Young people, even those who aren't eligible to vote, are not excluded from feeling stressed about politics. Almost half of young Americans report that politics and news media have had negative impacts on their mental health (2). Uncertainty about upcoming elections, political polarization and vitriol, inundation with intense information in the news and social media, and political disagreements with friends and family can all contribute to stress and anxiety for young people. As we approach the presidential election in November, check in with the young people in your life and use the tips below to help them manage any political stress they feel.

CHECK IN WITH THEIR EMOTIONS

The uncertainty of elections can fuel fear and anxiety, which can be overwhelming if ignored. Encourage the young people in your life to practice identifying, processing, and releasing their emotions. It might be helpful to acknowledge feelings aloud, saying something like, "Right now, I'm feeling anxious. The anxiety feels like tightness in my chest. Now that I've felt my anxiety, I am letting it go." By intentionally checking in, we can remind ourselves that emotions are temporary and consider the tools we have available to cope with difficult feelings (3,4,5).

MONITOR AND LIMIT MEDIA CONSUMPTION

Young people can quickly become overwhelmed with the constant influx of political information via social media and news. It's important to help young people set boundaries with their political media consumption. Work together to set up phone-free periods and use those times to do something you and the young person enjoy, like going on a walk or playing with a pet. You can also encourage using apps that limit screen time or require you to pause before opening certain apps.

Remember that not all news and political content online is necessarily trustworthy. Sit down with your young person to watch a video or read an article about a current issue, and work together to practice finding sources for the information shared. Websites like [PolitiFact](#) and [Factcheck.org](#) can help you determine whether a claim is truthful (3,4,6,7).

FIND MEANINGFUL WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

Getting involved in meaningful ways can also help alleviate election stress. Feeling powerless can contribute to anxiety, but young people can take action to make a difference. Civic engagement -- such as volunteering with an organization they care about, encouraging others to vote, or voting if they are eligible -- benefits youth mental health. Outside of civic engagement, even just helping a family member or doing a random act of kindness can help youth find purpose amid uncertainty (3,4,6,8).

PRACTICE MINDFULNESS

The uncertainty of election season can pull you out of the present moment and into worries about the future. Mindfulness helps us stay grounded and connected to what's going on around us. Work with your young person to brainstorm activities that help them stay in the present moment. Creative activities like drawing and journaling or physical activities like playing soccer with friends or taking a nature walk are examples of what a mindful activity might look like.

You can also encourage young people to check in with their emotional state and consider the impact of their words before discussing politics. Acknowledge that feeling afraid, anxious, or angry makes sense if you perceive your values being threatened or trivialized during a conversation. Remind young people that it's always okay to opt out of or walk away from unproductive conversations (3,4,6,7).

STAY CURIOUS

Encourage young people to respond to disagreement with curiosity rather than defensiveness. Model curiosity by asking questions like "I wonder what about that person's background, culture, and life experiences influences their way of thinking?" and "What can we learn from people who have different opinions than us?" when you hear a political opinion you disagree with. Demonstrating curiosity can help young people embrace differences, find common ground, and prevent stress or anger (6).

PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE

During stressful times, it's important to make time to take care of yourself. Start by helping your young person recognize what sets off political stress for them. Do feelings of anxiety come up when they see a certain TikTok account or type of content? Do discussions of politics amongst friends and family increase their stress? Work together to create a plan for self-care, which might include unfollowing negative accounts or listening to their favorite music after a stressful conversation. By recognizing and addressing these triggers, young people can better manage their political stress and maintain their well-being.³

RESOURCES

[Tips for Stressful Election Conversations | The Jed Foundation](#)

[How to Combat Misinformation and Find Reputable Sources Online | The Jed Foundation](#)

[Self-Care | Young People's Mental Health | YoungMinds](#)

[Healthy Self-Care for Teens: 4 Ways Families Can Help - HealthyChildren.org](#)



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