



Talking to Kids About the News

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Our Kids are paying attention

- According to a 2017 study:
 - More than half of kids (8-12) report that they follow the news.
 - Majority feel that knowing the news helps them “feel smarter”; but it is hard to follow.
 - 63% report they have felt afraid, angry or saddened by what they have seen.



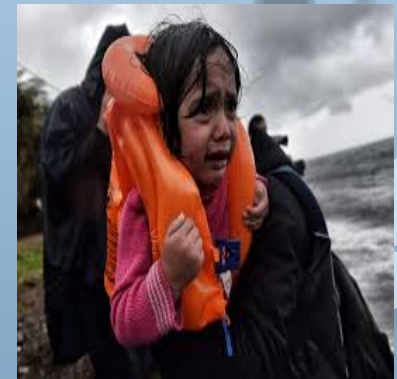
We underestimate their exposure

- Most of what kids learn is through social media, friends and teachers.
 - Websites, Facebook, Instagram, snapchat and smartphone apps.
- Kids still most likely to turn to family to help them process what they see and hear.
 - Parents and teachers still matter!!!
- How much should they know? How should we talk to them?



What seems to be coming up?

- Violence and war
- Safety and stability at home
- Violation of other peoples rights
- Anger and division in our families, our communities and our countries.



Talking to our Kids about Difficult Things

- Age and development matter.

- **Three Central Groups:**

- Preschool (3-5 years old)
- Young Elementary School (6-8 years old)
- Older Elementary School (9-11 years old)



- Some kids are more advanced for their age, others may not be ready yet.
- You are the best judge of what your child may be ready for.

Talking to your 3-5 year old

- We often underestimate what they see and hear.
 - Pick up on our emotions.
- Kids this age have trouble mixing up reality and fantasy.
- Content does not matter as much as general sight and sound.
 - Loud, disturbing and scary things matter more than what is being said.
 - May not verbalize questions



Talking to your 3-5 year old

- Know they take things literally.
 - Have trouble understanding our expressions.
- Remind them that they are safe, use physical comfort.
 - "That looked or sounded scary, but we are safe."
- Engage them in the language of play.
- Know the importance of routines to help them feel safe.
- Watch out for symptoms of stress: Nightmares, bed wetting, anxiety, clinginess, fear that things will happen to them.



Talking to your 6-8 year old

- Know that:
 - They can use symbolic thought/think about future.
 - Very self-focused... "How will this impact me..."
 - They can start to think in more complex ways; able to follow more of what is being said.
 - May draw incorrect conclusions, leading to more fear or confusion.
- What do we do when they ask questions?
 - Flip the question "What do you know? What do you think is happening?"
 - "What are your friends saying about it?"
- Limit the visual exposure.
 - When you talk with them about events, do so through reading about it or listening to it, as opposed to watching it on TV.
 - Seeing scary things can be overwhelming to them.



Talking to your 6-8 year old

- Answer their questions in the simplest way possible, but limit the details.
- We don't want to shut them down, but we also don't want to overwhelm them.
- Remember that they are likely to hear from other places.
- More likely to tell you they are struggling than younger children, but not always.
- Look for signs of stress (headache or stomachache very common).



Talking to your 9-11 year old

- Capable of logic and insight into what is happening.
 - May struggle with understanding the cause of bad things they see or hear about.
 - Still focused on self, how it might impact them (their families, their friends).
- Likely to ask deep and difficult questions.
 - More exposure and more opinions.
 - Exposure when with you if possible.
 - Ok to watch the news with them, but choose source and amount.
- Again, flip the question:
 - What do you think? What have you heard?



Tips

- Feeling safe is important for kids of all ages.
- Flipping the question can help you to meet them at their level.
 - Knowing what their friends say and do is very helpful!
- Flipping the question can also help you to understand when their logic is faulty or they have been misinformed.
- Monitor their media access.
- You know their capabilities and their curiosities.



Tips



- Be aware of your reaction:
 - Kids pick up on our sadness, anger, hostility...
- It is ok to be honest when you don't know, but we can use the moment to open larger conversations when they're ready.
- Shutting them down will not help (ex. Don't worry, You are too young).
 - If they're asking they have been exposed.
 - It is all about helping them process and "controlling the message."
 - Validate their emotions by listening and talking.