

Supporting Conversations During Increased Federal Law Enforcement Activity

Here are conversation starters you can use with young people, either individually or in a group setting. They're designed to be open-ended, non-leading, and supportive. You can adapt them based on age, setting, and the relationships you have with your young people.

Below you will find ideas around:

- Protocol considerations if leading with a group.
- Prompts and conversation starters sorted by purpose. *Choose 2-3 that feel right for you and your group.
- Closing considerations.

Group Setting Protocol

Facilitator Notes

- Normalize silence. It's ok, and presence is still participation
- Watch for signs of overwhelm; offer a break or 1:1 support
- Avoid debates or political framing. Keep focus on feelings and impact
- Have support resources available if emotions run high

Facilitator language:

- "A lot has been happening in our community, and it's okay to have different reactions."
- "This isn't about having the right answers, it's about listening and supporting each other."
- "You can share, pass, or just listen."

Group agreements:

- Speak from your own experience
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Respect privacy. What's shared here stays here; what's learned here leaves here
- No pressure to share, passing is ok

Opening Check-In

Choose one check in prompt, here are some examples:

- "In one word, how are you feeling today?"
- "On a scale of 1-5, how heavy does today feel?"
- "Share something that's been helping you get through the week."

Gentle Openers

- "A lot has been happening in our community lately. What have you noticed?"
- "What have you been hearing people talk about?"
- "How are things feeling for you right now?"

Prompts with Purpose

Understanding What They Know

- “What do you understand about what’s been happening?”
- “Where did you hear about it? (friends, social media, adults, the news?)
- “Is there anything you’ve seen or heard that stuck with you?”
- “What have you noticed happening in our community lately?”
- “What kinds of conversations are you hearing (at home, school, or online)?”
- “What questions have been coming up for you?”

Naming Feelings

- “How did that make you feel?”
- “How do events like this affect young people, even if they aren’t directly involved?”
- “What feelings come up when you see or hear about this?”
- “How do you notice stress showing up — in your body, mood, or behavior?”
- “Some people feel scared, angry, sad, or confused — do any of those fit for you?”
- “What’s been the hardest part for you lately?”

(Tip: If they say, ‘I don’t know,’ try: “That’s okay. Sometimes feelings are hard to name.”)

Media & Social Media

- “What kinds of videos or posts have you been seeing?”
- “How do those posts make you feel afterward?”
- “Do you think everything online shows the full picture?”
- “How do you decide what to believe?”
- “How does watching or scrolling affect your mood afterward?”

Safety & Support

- “Are there moments when you feel worried about safety?”
- “What helps you feel safer when things feel uncertain?”
- “If something on the news or online feels scary, who do you usually talk to?”
- “Who or what feels supportive right now?”

Connection & Support

- “Who do you feel most comfortable talking to about stuff like this?”
- “What helps you feel supported when things feel heavy?”
- “What do you wish adults understood right now?”

Expression & Coping

- “What helps you release stress when you’re feeling overwhelmed?”
- “Would it help to draw, write, move around, or just sit quietly together?”
- “What’s something that’s helped you feel a little calmer lately?”

Hope & Agency

- “When things feel unfair or scary, what helps you keep going?”
- “What does showing up for each other look like right now?”

- “If you could tell the community one thing, what would it be?”
- “What does taking care of ourselves look like right now?”
- “What are small ways people can show up for each other?”
- “What gives you hope, even a little?”

Closing the Conversation

- “Thank you for sharing. I’m really glad you told me.”
- “We don’t have to figure everything out today.”
- “If more thoughts come up later, we can talk again.”

Closing & Grounding

Closing prompt examples:

- “Name one thing you’re taking with you from today.”
- “Share one thing you’ll do to take care of yourself.”
- Quiet breathing or stretching together

Close with reassurance:

- “You’re not alone in feeling this.”
- “We can keep talking. Today doesn’t have to be the end of the conversation.”