

Supporting Young people What to say

Young people see and feel what's going on around them, especially in moments of intense community conflict.

The recent increase in Federal Law Enforcement presence in community has resulted in protests, school closures, widespread media coverage, and increased fear. All of which are very much visible to young people.

Here are ways you can support young people as they process this kind of trauma and uncertainty.



Acknowledge What They're Seeing and Feeling

Letting young people know their feelings are normal helps them feel understood and supported.

- "I know this feels like a lot to take in."
- "It makes sense to feel scared or upset when people in our community are affected."
- "It's okay to have many different feelings about this."



Have Age-Appropriate, Open Conversations

Listen without interrupting. Feeling heard is often more important than having answers.

- "What have you heard about this?"
- "How does it make you feel?"
- "What worries you the most?"
- "Is there anything you're worried about?"



Help Separate Feelings From Facts

Staying calm, even if you're upset, helps young people feel safe asking questions.

- "Some videos or posts don't show the whole story."
- "Not all information is shared right away, so it's okay to have questions or feel unsure."
- "Different sources may tell different parts of what happened, and sometimes what's reported by officials isn't the full story."



Talk about safety and who to turn to

Having a plan helps young people feel more in control.

- Reassuring them about what is being done to keep them safe right now.
- Naming trusted adults they can talk to, like parents, caregivers, teachers, counselors, or program staff.
- Making a simple plan, such as:
- "If something on the news or online scares you, come talk to me."



Encourage Healthy Ways to Express Feelings

There is no one "right" way to process big feelings.

- Drawing, writing, music, or journaling
- Small group conversations with peers, guided by a trusted adult
- Physical activity, play, or creative breaks when the news feels overwhelming



Support Through Community and Routine

Regular routines, like school, time with friends, and activities, help young people feel grounded and safe. When routines change, such as canceled classes or staying home for safety, anxiety can increase. Keeping some structure when possible and helping young people stay connected to caring peers and adults can help them feel more secure during uncertain times.



Talk About Action and Hope

Helping young people see acts of care and solidarity can build hope, even during hard times.

- "Some people are gathering peacefully to honor those affected."
- "Community members are checking on neighbors and helping each other."
- "There are ways to care about what's happening and support friends while staying safe."