



FRED ROGERS
— INSTITUTE —

TALKING WITH CHILDREN ABOUT DIFFICULT THINGS IN THE NEWS

“In times of stress, the best thing we can do for our children (and for each other) is to listen with our ears and our hearts and to be assured that our questions are just as important as our answers.”

- Fred Rogers -

During times of tragedy and difficulty in the news, we may think that children are unaware of what is happening. However, children are more aware - than we know and are especially sensitive to the moods and conversations of adults around them. Here are some ideas and considerations for supporting children when the news in the world is difficult:

- When the world feels uncertain and the news is scary, we can help children feel safe by letting children know we will always care for them and love them, no matter what.
- Be mindful of what children hear and see on the news. Children can overhear media and conversations that are not intended for them. It is best that they learn from a trusted adult, through meaningful and intentional conversations.
- Let children know you are always open to their questions. Before you answer it can help to ask the child, “What do you think?” or “What have you heard?” Sometimes, children may understand more than we realize, may have misinformation, or may have a much simpler question than we assume. If you know more about what the child is wondering, it can help you give a simple and honest answer.
- It’s okay if you don’t know an answer to the child’s question. You can let them know, “I wonder about that, too” and that you will share as you learn more. It can help to ask the child more about what they are feeling. Simply listening to the child’s feelings around their uncertainty can help them feel safe.
- Let children know that their feelings are always safe with you, whether they are feeling worried, angry, sad, or anything at all. As Fred Rogers reminds us, “anything that’s human is mentionable, and anything that’s mentionable can be more manageable.”
- Difficult news takes a toll on all of us. To care for the children in our lives, it is important to care for ourselves. Set boundaries around your own news intake, take moments to rest, and find a support network for yourself.
- Even when you are overwhelmed, unsure of what to say, or are struggling, you are just what the child in your life needs and you are enough.

Staying true to the vision of Fred Rogers, the Fred Rogers Institute serves children’s helpers in their work supporting children to grow as confident, competent, and caring human beings.

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