



NEWSLETTER

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Dear Caregivers,

This month's newsletter- talking to kids about hard topics- has really spawned from my own recent research on the subject as the world continues to be filled with turmoil and anxiety. Many days, it is hard to believe that this is our reality, although knowing that is a privilege because many communities experience this reality every day. If we look at Mr. Roger's teaching he always says "Look for the Helpers" and there are A LOT of helpers, but the constant chaos often drowns out those crucial voices and can leave you feeling helpless. What I do know is that the greatest strength we have is community, and luckily we have SYC as a part of that. Our greatest power is raising a generation of curious, compassionate, and emotionally intelligent children who can manage both their emotions and conflict. I know that the way to do this is through teaching children their rights and value, and the rights and value of communities other than their own. We do this by encouraging them to be curious, celebrating differences as what makes life exciting, modeling and coaching them to advocate for themselves and others, encouraging them to problem-solve, be uncomfortable and never stop learning, making mistakes and relearning. I hope this information grounds you in your own power to make change.

Practical Tips for talking to your children about hard topics

Highlights from [this](#) article by Dr. Aliza Pressman

- Choose the right environment
 - If you want your conversation with your child to be impactful you need to choose a time when you and your children can be completely present. A time when children are not rushed, not overstimulated and not preoccupied with something else. Sharing this information may feel pressing to you, but it is not to your children. For important conversations children need to be ready to receive them.
- Before you talk to your children- check in with your mind and body
 - When we share important information with our kids we need to be sure we're sharing the information without sharing our panic or helplessness. So check-in- Are you in an emotional state where you can calmly talk to your children or are you too triggered? If the answer is no, find a different time.
 - Center yourself first- feel your feet on the ground, take a deep breath in, lower your shoulders.
- Gather information about what they know first
 - Kids are sponges and absorb things all around them: playgrounds, school, older siblings, etc. Often preschool aged children will surprise you in what they've picked up from the environment around them.
 - Example: "I wonder if you've heard about..."
 - Listen with an open mind and stay calm and curious with whatever they say.
- Keep the conversation simple and developmentally appropriate
 - Remember this is not a one off conversation, it is the beginning of an on-going discussion. Keep the information simple- only answering the exact questions asked or one overarching theme
- Any reaction is okay, including no reaction
 - You may expect them to have a certain reaction or respond in a certain way, but this is not realistic for preschoolers. Remember what we know about brain development- preschoolers are egocentric beings first, slow processors, and play is their true language
 - Do not set yourself or your preschooler up for failure by expecting them to react in a certain way or judging their humanity by their reaction.

- Focus on reassuring your children that they are safe
 - Even though the times can feel hopeless and helpless, children need to know that the grown ups in their life will still keep them safe.
 - Example: “This might all feel very big and confusing but what I do know is it is my job to take care of you and you are safe.”

Tips for keeping conversations developmentally appropriate

- Be HONEST
 - It’s okay to not have all the answers
- Keep it Simple
 - Stick to the facts, what is in our control vs what is out of our control
- Emphasize Safety and the role of the adult vs child
 - It’s adult’s job to reassure children of their safety and security
- Validate Feelings without fixing
 - Learn to sit in/ with the uncomfortable
- Lead with Empathy & Curiosity
 - Try not to minimize their feelings or project your own feelings
- Try to avoid toxic positivity
 - It’s okay if you don’t know what’s going to happen or if there are unknowns

Collective Wisdom

Additional Ideas from SYC teachers

- A good way to approach is checking in with kids about “what’s your idea?” Or coming at it with curiosity- being open to what a kid wants to know about or may already be thinking about.
- Limit kids' exposure to the news. They probably hear and see more than you know. As they learn about difficult things in the world, be sure they also learn about people who are helping.
- I especially like the first three tips in the Pressman article that are aimed at parents- I think so often we look for advice on how to talk to kids, what to say to kids, etc. without thinking about ourselves and our needs, and how the first step for any hard conversation/topic is to regulate yourself first.

Additional Resources

Follow these links to additional resources. Have some of your own? Please share!

- [Sesame Workshop- variety of tough topics information](#)
- [10 Practical Tips for Parenting During Political Turmoil and Hard Times](#)
- [Talking about Hard things with kids-Emily Oster, PhD](#)
- [How To Talk To Your Little Kids About Hard Things - Emily P.G. Erickson](#)
- [Meg Foundation- Tips for Tough Conversations with Kids](#)
- [Approaching Hard Conversations with Kids | Playworks](#)
- [7 Easy Ways To Have Hard Conversations With Your Child – Generation Mindful](#)
- [The Timeless Teachings of Mister Rogers | Parenting Tips & Advice | PBS KIDS for Parents](#)

Have any questions, comments or topic suggestions? Let’s chat! e-mail me at alicia@syccolumbus.org.

Office hours: Tuesday 9:30–10:30 am, Wednesday 1–2pm or by appointment

Things you CAN do during these difficult times

- Develop a family mission statement
 - Preschoolers can help draw pictures about what makes your family special
 - Have a family discussion about your values
 - Step-by- Step instructions here:
 - <https://childrenshealinginstitute.org/family-mission-statement/>
 - After you develop a family mission statement you can relate your discussion to your family's stated values.
- Find ways to show up for your community.
 - Volunteer as a family: <https://www.seedsofcarings.org/>
 - Raise money, collect food and raise awareness for organizations in your community
 - <https://www.crisohio.org/get-involved>
 - <https://columbusfoundation.org/the-giving-store/gifts-of-kindness>
 - <https://www.cap4kids.org/columbus/cph-resource-lists/>
- Patronize immigrant, BIPOC, & LGBTQIA+ owned businesses
 - <https://www.columbuslivingblog.com/black-owned/everything-black-owned-in-columbus-ohio>
 - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/6111b0579f7f352a814fbb25/t/612593e968bb1b12f492fa1e/1629852650403/Support-Businesses-Owned-By-Immigrants-and-Refugees.pdf>
 - <https://ohio.org/travel-inspiration/articles/lgbtq-owned-ohio-businesses-to-check-out>
 - <https://www.experiencecolumbus.com/things-to-do/minority-owned/>
- Booklists that explore inclusivity and diversity:
 - <https://reachoutandread.org/booklists/>
 - <https://www.doinggoodtogether.org/bhf-book-lists/diversity-picture-books>
 - <https://socialjusticebooks.org/booklists/>
- Decolonize your parenting:
 - <https://latinxparenting.org/>
 - <https://www.comebacktocare.com/blog/whats-decolonized-parenting-how-to-start-decolonizing-your-parenting>
 - <https://desireebstephens.substack.com/p/building-liberated-foundations-decolonizing>
- Additional anti-racism learning resources:
 - <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/>
 - <https://www.amightygirl.com/>
 - <https://www.embracerace.org/>
 - <https://sexpositivefamilies.com/>
 - [Mr. Chazz's early childhood information](#)

This is only a few of the MANY resources out there. If you have additional resources please let the community know and I will add them to the list!