

SESSION NINE: DISCUSSING HATE AND VIOLENCE WITH CHILDREN

Prepare:

In order to provide the reassurance and guidance children need, adults should first come to terms with their own feelings. Talk to other adults about your own feelings and perceptions. Recognize that your past experiences may influence how you look at current situations.

Be Alert:

Be alert to signs a child may be upset. These signs may include withdrawal, lack of interest, acting out, fear of school or other activities, or anything that deviates from the child's norm.

Listen:

- Listen carefully in order to learn what children know and think.
- Treat all children's questions with respect and seriousness; do not "shush," ignore, or dismiss children.
- Clarify children's questions so that you can understand what is being asked, what has led to the question, and how much information a child wants.
- Sometimes, without repeating the exact words, it is helpful to reflect back what you think you heard and give the child the opportunity to confirm or to clarify.

Reassure:

- Review the facts of what actually happened. Reassure children in age-appropriate ways that they are safe. Let children know that many people and organizations are working to make us safe.
- Reassure children that while there are many people who do things that are hard to understand, we love them very much and will keep them safe.

Be Honest:

- Answer questions as clearly and honestly as you can, using terms and words that are age-appropriate. If you don't know the answer, say so and make a plan to find out.
- Correct yourself if you give incomplete or inaccurate information. Don't be afraid of making or admitting a mistake.
- Acknowledge that there are people who hate other people and that hateful actions can be threatening.

Share Your Perceptions:

Share your perceptions and feelings, but avoid conveying hopelessness. Young brains are still developing and can't understand some complexities. Avoid giving young children more specific detail than necessary.

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Take Action:

- Children need to know that people are not powerless in the face of hate.
- Have regular discussions about ways people can address hate. Brainstorm ways to address these concerns at home, in school, and in the community.
- Help children understand that if hateful words go unchallenged, they can escalate to acts of physical violence. Discuss how hate behaviors usually begin with unkind words. Discuss and practice ways children can challenge name calling and bullying.
- Help children understand that sometimes it might not be safe for them to intervene; teach children to seek adult assistance when someone is being harassed or bullied.
- Help your children feel good about themselves so that they learn to see themselves as people who can contribute to creating a better world.

Questions, comments, or concerns regarding this handout or other topics of discussions about discrimination, violence, or hate crimes:



A large, rounded rectangular box with a dark green border, containing 18 horizontal lines for writing. The box is positioned in the lower half of the page, below the 'Take Action' section. It is connected to the 'Questions, comments, or concerns...' text above it by a green line that forms a large arrow shape pointing towards the box. The background of the page features a faint, stylized illustration of a turtle in shades of green and yellow.

SESSION NINE: FAMILY DISCRIMINATION RESPONSE PLAN

This is how we are going to protect ourselves, our families, and our communities from discrimination:

PARENTS/ADULTS:

When my child informs me of an incident of discrimination, I will...

[Empty response box for parents/adults]

When I witness a discrimination situation, I will...

[Empty response box for parents/adults]

Pledge:

I pledge from this day onward to do my best to interrupt discrimination and to stop those who, because of hate, would hurt, harass, or violate the civil rights of anyone. I will try at all times to be aware of my own biases against people who are different from me. I will speak out against anyone who mocks, seeks to intimidate, or actually hurts someone of a different race, religion, ethnic group, or sexual orientation. I will reach out to support those who are targets of discrimination or harassment.

Parent Signature

Date

