



Guide to Difficult Discussions with Kids

1 Introduce & Explain

This is not a common event

This topic can feel stressful for some kids and families, and everyone experiences it differently. If you're feeling worried or anxious, who's a trusted adult you could reach out to?

2 Provide Facts

What happened?

Here are the facts. Some people might think it was a big deal, and others might not, but this is what actually happened.

3 Connecting Common Experience

Ask kids to talk about their experiences.

What did you think was going on?
What did you notice as the day went on?

Draw out the common experiences



4 Connecting Common Reactions

Questions to ask

How did you feel about the event itself?

Have feelings diminished or intensified?

Let kids know that with time, reactions will become manageable for most people.

If feelings are not diminishing with time, let kids know they should talk to a trusted adult

5 The Future

Questions to ask

What coping skills did you use during the event?

What possible good came out of this experience?

Do you think you were helpful to those who were stressed?

If you could go back in time, what would you do differently to make it less stressful?

6 Closing

Reassure students they are safe.

The adults responsible have a plan in place in case this happens again.

Be positive about moving on.



Adult reactions are essential influences on student's threat perceptions.

(DON'T call children "silly" or challenge their fearful reactions; DO recognize a wide range of reactions as normal)

While the majority of children are "moving on" from an event, there are likely some residual concerns about safety.

This dialog will help children regardless of their emotional state.