

Are you encountering students who are indicating emotional concerns about the election?

We received this request today and provided a quick response. Because of the time factor, we are sharing it directly by email to elicit more thoughts about the matter.

Request from a school district health and wellness coordinator:

“Our team has been tasked with providing district-wide activity/lesson to use in the event it is needed; the activities, links, and resources will provide supports for the election and the results of the election. The idea would be to support teachers/staff as to how to advise students to respond when people have a belief/view different from themselves. For example, if you as a student are in the majority or minority point of view, how should we respond to each other in kindness and empathy?”

Center Response:

Here are some resources we identified:

>From *Helping Students in Troubling Times* (the American School Counselor Association)

<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/school-counselors/professional-development/learn-more/helping-students-troubling-times>

“...For students of some populations, the election results brought not just anxiety and despair, but fear for the future. During an emotional period like this, it is important to remind students that their strong emotions will pass and therefore they must refrain from drastic or risky behaviors that could have long-term consequences. If they feel they’ve suffered an emotional loss, they must give themselves time to heal....

Help students process information or images they find inflammatory in print, television and social media. Very often, simply discussing current events can help students develop a better understanding, and expressing their emotions can help students deal with them more effectively....

Review upcoming topics for classroom lessons to determine any adjustments you could make to address your school’s climate. If you don’t have classroom lessons scheduled in the immediate future, consider adding them to have an impact on a larger group of students. Topics such as creating positive relationships and communication skills are appropriate topics after the election....”

>From *Educating for Democracy* <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/20/10/educating-democracy>

“...Let young people take the lead....

Expand your teaching. Don’t just teach civic knowledge – teach “action civics... Stay local. Students are eager to engage in the issues they care about, but “it has got to be local and action-oriented,” ...

Focus on the issues young people see every day, the issues in their communities, keeps things concrete..... Connect to the local will prepare students to tackle issues on a small and large scale. ...”

>From: *Talking to kids about the 2020 election*

<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/6-tips-for-talking-to-kids-about-the-2020-election#6.-Warn-kids-about-post-election-responses>

“...Experts say the following 6 tips can help parents do that in positive ways.

1. Encourage their curiosity. Rather than assuming kids won't understand issues or processes, welcoming their questions can help give them a greater understanding....

2. Explain the right to vote. ...Focusing on the right to vote is a positive way to spin the discussion... Explain to them that everyone has a voice. While [kids] may not be able to vote, encourage your kids to get involved at school or in the community with issues that are important to them, such as the environment or the economy... If getting involved isn't possible, help them think about issues they care about and how candidates feel about related causes....

3. Display respect for all parties. Giving kids a breakdown of the general ideology behind parties can help them understand why people vote one way or the other. It's important that while we are making sure our youth know that participating in the democratic process is important, and we may feel strongly about our views and beliefs, that not everyone shares those beliefs, and they have different experiences and backgrounds that inform their beliefs... stress the importance of listening to understand, and disagreeing without becoming insulting.

4. Prepare kids for opinions from peers, Whether it's via e-learning or in the classroom, or during a play date, kids may hear their peers talk about candidates or policies.... urge your kids to listen with empathy....

5. Ease their concerns about particular issues. Adolescents and teenagers may be concerned about certain issues that could directly affect them, their family, or community. this is particularly true for those who are in marginalized groups. Many of the big issues being discussed by both parties in this election cycle can have a major impact on the ways that they are supported by their government and what rights they can exercise. Proposed actions from some politicians can upend the way they live, learn, and work in their community... Because of this, it's understandable that some kids may feel anxious, confused, or uncertain. Validate how they are feeling and normalize those feelings because so many other people are feeling the same way. Sometimes that's all our youth need — someone to listen and really hear them...

6. Warn kids about post-election responses. While kids may hear about, witness, or participate in rallies and protests leading up to the election, it can be helpful to inform them about the potential for heightened emotions and violent responses after a president is elected.... You don't have to have all the answers, but be willing to engage in a dialogue with them. This can help to dispel any misinformation they might have and ground them in values you want to promote...”

Listserv Participants: How have you been addressing this concern? Let us know so we share. Send to

* For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>