

## Discussing Hate and Violence with Children

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**Treat all children's questions with respect and seriousness; do not "shush," ignore, or dismiss children.**

Children are aware of what is happening in the world around them. Family members and educators cannot assume that children are unaffected by global events. When frightening and violent incidents occur, both children and adults may experience a range of emotions including fear, confusion, sadness and anger.

To counteract fear and give reassurance, adult family members, teachers and day care providers can provide opportunities for children to express how they feel and channel their feelings into positive actions.

Discussions between adults and children in difficult situations can be an opening for reinforcing family and community values, beliefs and traditions. Here are some strategies on how to begin these discussions and how to prepare your children.

Download the brochure in [English](#) or [Spanish](#) (PDFs) for the complete content of this publication.

### **Prepare**

In order to provide the reassurance and guidance children need, adults should first come to terms with their own feelings. Explore and discuss with other adults your own feelings and perceptions.

**Listen**

Listen carefully in order to learn what children know and are thinking.

Treat all children's questions with respect and seriousness; do not "shush," ignore, or dismiss children.

**Be Honest**

Answer questions as clearly and honestly as you can, using developmentally appropriate language and definitions. If you don't know the answer to a child's question, say so and make a plan to try to find out.

**Take Action**

Children need to know that people are not powerless in the face of hate; there are many things children and adults can do.

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.