



WAYS TO TALK TO CHILDREN

Immigration and Deportation

Tips to Promote Child Well-Being and Resilience

Discussing immigration and deportation

News on the issue of immigration and deportation has increased lately. As a result of the new immigration changes, uncertainty and unpredictability are constant. This creates fear, worry and anxiety among families, children and adolescents. A family member could be affected directly or indirectly. Children and adolescents may hear about the topic from their peers, teachers, social media, the news, or the adults around them. They may also be exposed to challenges, with high levels of stress and anxiety.

Children of all ages may be afraid of being separated from their families, or afraid of what else might happen. They will have questions about what certain terms mean and how it may impact them. Parents may wonder how they can talk about this topic and how much they should share with their children. Talking about this topic, especially with children and adolescents, is important to alleviate fear and worries. This helps them understand that it is okay to communicate with their parents or caregivers and feel safe. Also, having open and appropriate conversations can positively help expand their ability to process and understand what is happening in their environment.

During times of uncertainty, children and adolescents may experience the following symptoms of stress:

- Feelings of anxiety, worry, sadness.
- Not wanting to go to school, or having difficulty going to school
- Aggressive or regressive behavior
- Crying
- Changes in sleeping or eating patterns
- Separation anxiety
- Anger

It is important for families to continue their regular routines and use self-care strategies to alleviate symptoms of stress and anxiety. It is important to foster positive relationships within and outside the family to have support and overcome difficulties.



How to Communicate

Use simple, age-appropriate language

Avoid using legal or complex terms unless the child already understands them. Adapt the explanation to each child's level of understanding.

- **Young children (6-8 years):** Use simple stories or comparisons. For example:
 - “Sometimes people move from one place to another, like when you and I moved houses. But there are places where people move because they need to be safe or because they are looking for a better job.”
 - **Older children (9-12 years):** They can understand more detailed explanations, but it is still important to be clear and concrete:
 - “People from different countries move to other places to have a better or safer life. Some, like your grandparents, moved here for work or to be closer to family. But it's not always easy to move. Sometimes the country's rules don't allow people to stay, and that can make them afraid or sad.”
 - **Teenagers (13 years and older):** They can understand more complex issues and may have difficult questions, so it is important to be honest, but without overloading them with information:
 - “Some people migrate because they do not have the same opportunities in their country or are in danger. Here, the migration rules can be very complicated and sometimes do not allow everyone to stay, even if they need to. This can cause a lot of anxiety and confusion, but it is important to know that there are organizations that fight for everyone's rights.”
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- **Validate their feelings:** Children may feel confused, unsure, or scared. Make sure they know their feelings are valid.
 - **Explain the concept of safety:** Remind children that they are emotionally and physically safe, explain that there are measures to protect them and that they find support in older people.
 - **Use examples from familiar people or stories:** Share stories that also share a similar narrative and are part of our daily lives. This helps to reduce the comparison between “them vs. us,” and reminds us that we are part of the same community.
 - **Focus on the value of family and unity:** It is important to convey that during times of uncertainty, family support and togetherness are the most important things.
 - **Address uncertainty with hope:** Even if children express their fears, it is helpful to focus on solutions and hope. Information from organizations or people who can help them can ease worries.
 - **Create an open space to talk:** Let children feel comfortable expressing their fears and concerns. Reaffirms security and stability at home: Even though there are changes and challenges, the home remains a place of love and stability.

Create an Emergency Plan

- Identify safe places
- Collect essential documents
- Emergency contact information
- Learn about your rights

Resources

- **American Civil Liberties Union:**
 - www.aclu.org/know-your-rights/immigrants-rights

