

HOW TO RESPOND AND HELP OUR CHILDREN IN CHALLENGING TIMES

Prepare yourself:

- Children tend to observe their parent's emotions. Parents need to work on their own fears and anxieties, calm down, and become well informed of the facts before talking to their children. It doesn't mean that parents should feel perfectly well, but it doesn't help a child to hear all the parent's intense feelings.

First start by talking about what your child feels they need to talk about in regards to this topic. Make sure to set a time aside where you are not in the middle of something or in a hurry.

Listen to your child, without interruptions, accepting their point of view. (I understand how you feel...)

Afterward:

Children tend to have a difficult time understanding the "ifs" or the question of probabilities. **Explain** to your child that there are people who are working for everyone's well-being.

The moment can be used to teach your child the importance of the decisions we make, that not everyone thinks like us, but that we all deserve respect.

If your child asks the same things multiple times, try not to get angry. **Restate** what you have already said in a comforting manner. Help your child understand that they can do things to help their day be better----draw, sing, laugh together.

If your child expresses fear that their family might be separated, or that they may arrive home and not be able to find their family, respond calmly. First, accept the child's point of view. If you think that this could happen in your family, don't pretend that there isn't a risk or danger. Explain to your child that no matter what, "Our family will make decisions that will keep us together and we will have what we need." It's important for the child's mental health to know that their family will do what is necessary to remain together.

If this explanation is not enough for your child, make a family plan in case something occurs. Having a plan can serve to calm your child and give them a way to understand the situation. Remind them that having a plan in place does not mean that something bad will happen, but that it can help people stay calm in the middle of a crisis.

Children sometimes don't know how to manage their feelings. **Recognize** their feelings (we all have the right to have feelings).

Are you feeling afraid? Are you angry? Are you sad?, etc.

After identifying the feeling, **talk about actions** one can take to deal with these feelings. What do we need to deal with our feelings at **this moment**:

A big hug? To punch a pillow? To cry? To draw? To sing?

Remind your child that your family is strong and that when there are hard times, the family will work together so that everyone is together and has what they need.

If your child is having nightmares, can't concentrate at school, changes their routines or eating habits, or becomes aggressive, talk to the school counselor or social worker to get more help and information. You can also talk to your child's doctor. Your doctor can refer you to a counselor or psychologist who can help your family with a specific need.

For more information please call 615-320-5152 or visit conexionamericas.org



Prepared in collaboration with:

Family & Children's Service

What should I do now?

For now, the most important things are:

- know your rights
- stay informed
- be cautious about false information and confirm facts before making big decisions

Please share our website www.conexionamericas.org , our Facebook page @ConexionAmericas and our texting service with your family and friends so that they are informed too.

For questions or reports of incidents at school, work or in the community, please call us at 615-320-5152.

To receive text messages from us, text the word CONEXION to 313131.

Our mission is to build a welcoming community and create opportunities where Latino families can belong, contribute and succeed.

www.conexionamericas.org