


Supporting through Difficult & Tragic Events



Want to Support Your Little but Don't Know How?





It is crucial to be there for young people in times of grief and anger. To support your Little, you can provide space for thoughts and emotions they may be processing.

Below is some guidance for you to connect with your Little and discuss difficult but important events, such as police brutality or the passing of legislation limiting young people of color's access to their own history.



Prepare for the Conversation

What are you thinking and feeling? Begin by addressing **your own readiness** before engaging with your Little. **First**, take care of your immediate needs by processing your own **feelings, emotional stability** and asking yourself what support you need. **Then** consider your own identity. **Reflect** on how your own **social identity, political views, and life experiences** influence how you respond to current events. Does anything make it harder for you to relate to your Little? **Finally**, ensure you are **fully aware** of the facts of the event. Keep note of misinformation that may surface online to facilitate your conversation.



Take Time to Stop and **PLAY**



Pause

- Orient yourself to what's going on for your Little in that moment. Is there anything else going on in their life that should be addressed first?
- Figure out first what your Little knows and address that.
 - Ask your Little if they've heard anything in the news that they are concerned about.
 - Answer the questions they ask without giving unnecessary detail. If your Little is not already aware of recent events, it may not be appropriate to tell them, depending on their age, maturity, or experiences with trauma.
 - If you have concerns about whether and how to talk about the issue with your Little, check in with your BBBS Match Support Specialist.
- Continue to check in with what you are thinking and feeling
- Observe your Little and engage in healthy silence. Give your Little time to process their emotions and feelings about the event.
- If your Little doesn't want to talk about it, that's fine too!



Listen to Learn

- Actively listen and reflect: Immerse yourself in what it's like to be your Little.
- Paraphrase your Little and ask open-ended questions.
 - *"Can you tell me more about that?"*
 - *"How are you feeling about..."*
- Don't assume you know what your Little is feeling.



Affirm Youth

- Look at your Little as a collaborator and an expert on their own lives. Express empathy, and validate their feelings and willingness to share.
 - "It sounds like you feel [adjective] about this. Thank you for sharing"
 - "What do you think needs to happen to make things right?"
- Offer support and resources, if asked.
- Don't judge or assume you know the answers.

Note: If your Little seems to be struggling significantly, it's okay to reach out to your BBBS Match Support Specialist.



Avoid These Pitfalls

- Saying “I understand” diminishes another’s personal perspective.
- Being dismissive and quickly moving on or changing the subject.
- Making judgments and giving advice on what the other person should or should not do or feel.
- Challenging another person’s feelings and trying to show them they are wrong in how they feel.
- Making it about yourself. Be aware of whose story is being told.

