

Talk to Students about Racialized Violence

The increasing racial turmoil in the U.S. will be affecting many of our students and families, making it important to reach out to students to talk about it. Here are some tips.

Don't avoid it: It is okay to not have all the answers. And not talking about it speaks volumes.

Acknowledge: Simply acknowledging what is going on is a huge step in reducing isolation, communicating concern, and opening the discussion for student who may be feeling alone:

"I wonder if you have heard about or been following the terrible events in the news, lately, about the acts of racialized violence?"

Process the Emotions Together: Ask students how they are feeling about these events, and share some of your own thoughts and feelings and model of openness and compassion.

"I know that there might be a range of emotions people have, watching such terrible events in our world. I have been upset by the violence and thinking about what can do to help stop racial discrimination and violence. How are you feeling? What have you been thinking about it?"

"How are you thinking about or experiencing your own racial identity at this moment?" (older students)

"How are you feeling about this, as a young person of colour?" (Younger students)

"What conversations have you been having with your family, friends, others, about this?"

Remind your student(s) that their voices and actions matter. Encourage younger students to commit to fighting racism, in their language and behaviour; encourage older students to raise their voices in appropriate protest or by supporting anti-racism initiatives locally and globally.

Learn more about talking with students about racialized violence:

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/02/talking-race-controversy-and-trauma>

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/04/talking-about-race-mostly-white-schools>

Encourage the parents of all children to talk with them about this:

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/05/31/how-talk-kids-racism-racial-violence-police-brutality/5288065002/>

<https://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/07/12/talking-to-kids-about-racial-violence/>