

Tips for Parents by Susie Kohl

Allaying Children's Election-Related Fears

PARENTS ARE VOICING more and more concern about the effects of the current presidential election on children, who may be imbibing the whirlwind of verbal assault and apocalyptic predictions. It's helpful for parents to step back from the media drama, as well as their own emotional reactions to this election, and think about what they want their children to learn.

Most importantly, children need to know that they will be safe. To reassure children, we have to stop wringing our own hands or talking in foreboding tones, about the consequences of the election. Parents also need to find out what rumors children might be hearing from their peers so that they can discount scary perceptions. Our job, as adults, is to reassure children everything will be okay.

One way to counteract the current atmosphere of divisive tribalism, portrayed by the media, is to talk with older children about both sides of a political issue, demonstrating the importance of using critical thinking to evaluate conflicting ideas rather than reacting emotionally. This is also a perfect time to discuss about our governmental system of checks and balances, which protects our country from any one person from having too much influence.

This election also highlights problems with prejudice. Many young people feel under threat. Talking with older children about these issues can help them to become more compassionate. We can also prevent stereotyping by through education about other cultures, religions, and ways of thinking, and by always encouraging our children to be able to step into another person's point of view.

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