



YMCA OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY
**COMMUNITY
WELL-BEING
& BELONGING**

Tips to Support Kids Through Difficult Times

Life is full of unexpected moments, and as parents and caregivers, we play a significant role in helping children process events in a way that makes them feel safe and supported. With a focus on **Positive Youth Development** and youth mental well-being, our Y's mental health team put together these gentle, caring tips to help guide you through those important conversations.





Consider What's Age-Appropriate

Every child is different, and the way we share information should match their age and maturity level. Younger children don't need all the details, while tweens and teens may need more context to help them make sense of things. Trust your instincts and share in a way that feels right for your child.



Ask What They Already Know

Before jumping in, invite your child to share what they've heard or what they think about the situation. Listen without interruption—this not only helps you understand their perspective but also allows you to gently correct any misinformation and fill in important gaps. More than anything, it reassures them that their thoughts matter.



Encourage Them to Share Their Story

Children process events in different ways—some may want to talk, while others may express their feelings through drawing, acting out scenarios in play, or telling the story repeatedly. This repetition is completely normal and part of how they make sense of things. Letting them express themselves in their own way can be healing.



Reassure Them About Their Safety

Kids need to know that the adults in their lives are looking out for them. Reassure them about the steps being taken to keep them and their community safe. At the Y, we always prioritize making sure every child feels secure, supported, and cared for.



Keep the Door Open for Ongoing Conversations

Questions and feelings may surface in the days ahead, and that's okay. Let your child know that they can always come to you—or another trusted adult—whenever they need to talk. Above all, listen with warmth, speak in a gentle tone, and create a space where their hearts and minds can find calm.

Your love and support make all the difference.