

Talking to students about the unrest

At Renaissance we stand for:

Peace

Safety

Dialogue

Whenever we talk to students about the current situation and how this might affect them, we maintain our commitment to peace in our community, safety for all and dialogue between those who disagree.

In terms of talking to students about the events, this infographic (created by a teacher, based on a podcast by Dr. Steven Berkowitz) gives six key points to bear in mind when talking to students which are relevant for our current situation in Hong Kong.



[Cool Cat teacher](#)

Tips drawn from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Start the conversation.

- Talk honestly about incidents with children. Not talking about it can make the events more threatening in their minds. Silence suggests that what has occurred is too horrible even to speak about or that you do not know what has happened.
- With social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, text messages, newsbreaks on favourite radio and TV stations, and others), it is highly unlikely that children and teenagers have not heard about this.
 - o **What do children already know?**
Start by asking what they have already heard about the events from the media and from friends. Listen carefully; try to figure out what know or believe. Listen for misinformation, misconceptions, and underlying fears or concerns. Understand that this information will change as more facts about the event are known.
 - o **Gently correct inaccurate information.**
If they have inaccurate information or misconceptions, take time to provide the correct information in simple, clear, age-appropriate language.
 - o **Encourage children to ask questions, and answer those questions directly.**

Children/teens may have some difficult questions about what is happening. For example, they may ask if it is possible that it could happen in school; they are probably really asking whether it is “likely.” The concern about re-occurrence will be an issue for caregivers and children/teens alike. While it is important to discuss the likelihood of this risk, they are also asking if they are safe. Like adults, children/teens are better able to cope with a difficult situation when they have the facts about it. Having question-and-answer talks gives children/ teens ongoing support as they begin to cope with the range of emotions stirred up by these events.

- **Limit media exposure.**

Limit your child’s exposure to media images of the unrest, and do not allow your very young children to see or hear any TV/radio unrest-related messages. Remember what may not be upsetting to an adult may be very upsetting and confusing for a child or teen. Limit your own exposure as well. Adults may become more distressed with nonstop exposure to media coverage of these events. If your child has watched coverage, take a minute to turn off the television and ask the child about what they think about what was seen. This also gives you an opportunity to discuss the event and gently correct misperceptions.

HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT UNREST

ONE

The adults in your life will do their best to keep you safe.

FOUR

I cannot control my world but I can control how I react to it. May I seek to behave in ways that make our world a better place to live.



TWO

Understand filter bubbles. We often see what we look for in the world... and social media gives us more of what we're looking for, too. Break the bubble.

THREE

Keep perspective. Risk is everywhere we go and has existed in all times.

@coolcatteacher

<https://www.coolcatteacher.com/talk-kids-political-turmoil-and-unrest/>



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Important points to note:

1. The adults in your life will do their best to keep you safe
 - Be open and honest with children about what we do to keep them safe. "School was closed when we thought it might not be safe for you to get here. Now that we think it is safe, school is open again. We won't deliberately put you in danger."
2. Filter bubbles
 - Facebook has algorithms designed specifically to show more of what we like or what we have viewed previously. Other sites will do the same thing. It is important to let children know about these bubbles. There are difficult things happening, but social media may not be helping what we see.
3. Risk is everywhere you go
 - Don't tell the students that they will definitely be safe. It is OK to say that there is risk and that there are adults who are committed to protect them. Avoid saying, "We will not let anything bad happen to you".
 - Instead, say,
 - o "The adults in your life who care about you will do everything we can to keep you safe."
 - o "We are with you and we will work to do our best to keep you safe."
 - o "Remember to keep your eyes open and use good common sense when you travel."
 - o "Listen to the people around you when you are travelling and take advice from them."
4. Perspective
 - Remember that the only thing you can control in the world is yourself.
 - Have conversations with your students that count. Help the students in your care to reflect, not take sides and focus on the positive.

Talk to the children about how they are feeling and how they can manage feelings of worry and concern.