PARENT'S GUIDE

TO ADDRESSING CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES



WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

Children today are growing up in an information age. With so many sources of information readily available (but not always accurate!) it can be overwhelming for young people to make sense of the world around them. These simple tips are designed to assist parents in supporting their children in development of their knowledge and understanding of issues they care about.

Thinking about making sense of current affairs, as well as sensitive and controversial issues, is a key part of children's education and development. Children are interested in understanding society and it's changes , but they need support and guidance from trusted and respected adults in order to do so.

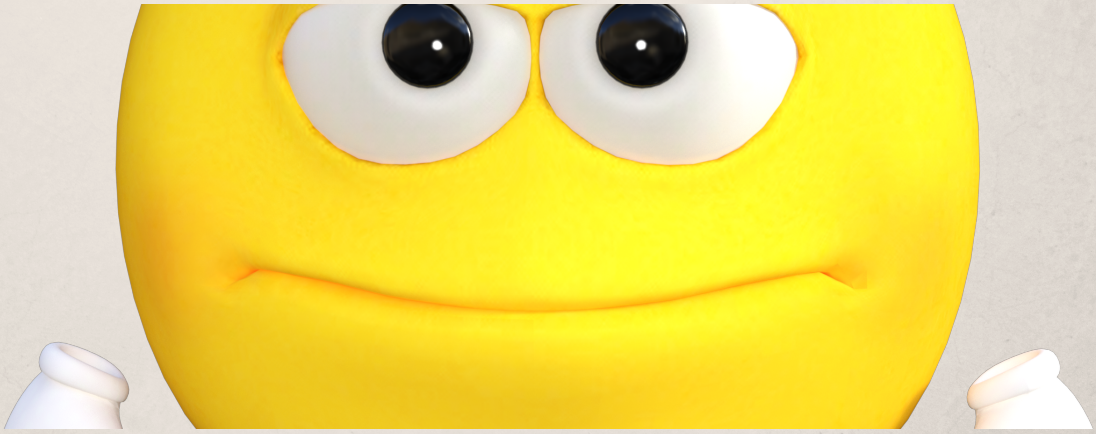
KEY THEMES: WHEN ADDRESSING A CONTROVERSIAL OR SENSITIVE ISSUE: CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. ADDRESS THE EMOTION-FEELINGS FIRST

2. WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE?

S3. WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO ABOUT IT?

Theme #1
Emotion



EMOTION

Social and political issues often create strong feelings and emotions in ourselves and in our communities. We all have emotional reactions to sensitive social and political stories and the techniques the media use to report on these issues often serve to heighten these emotions.

Children pick up on feelings of anger, anxiety or enthusiasm from both the media and yourself as a parent.

It can be useful to address these emotions and why we might feel this way before we start exploring the issues themselves. A good place to start when supporting children in this process is to get an understanding about how your child feels about a particular issue. Are they feeling confused, hopeful, anxious etc? (see Step-by step guide for tips on how to do this)

REMEMBER!

1. ADDRESS THE EMOTION-FEELINGS FIRST

2. WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT EVIDENCE IS THERE?

3. WHAT DO WE WANT TO DO ABOUT IT?

Theme #2
Evidence





EVIDENCE

When talking with your children it is important to gauge from where they are at, in terms of knowledge and understanding. What do they know, think or understand about an issue? It is not important that as a parent you are an expert yourself (very few people are!) Instead, it is important to support children to think critically about the stories they see and hear. This could involve:

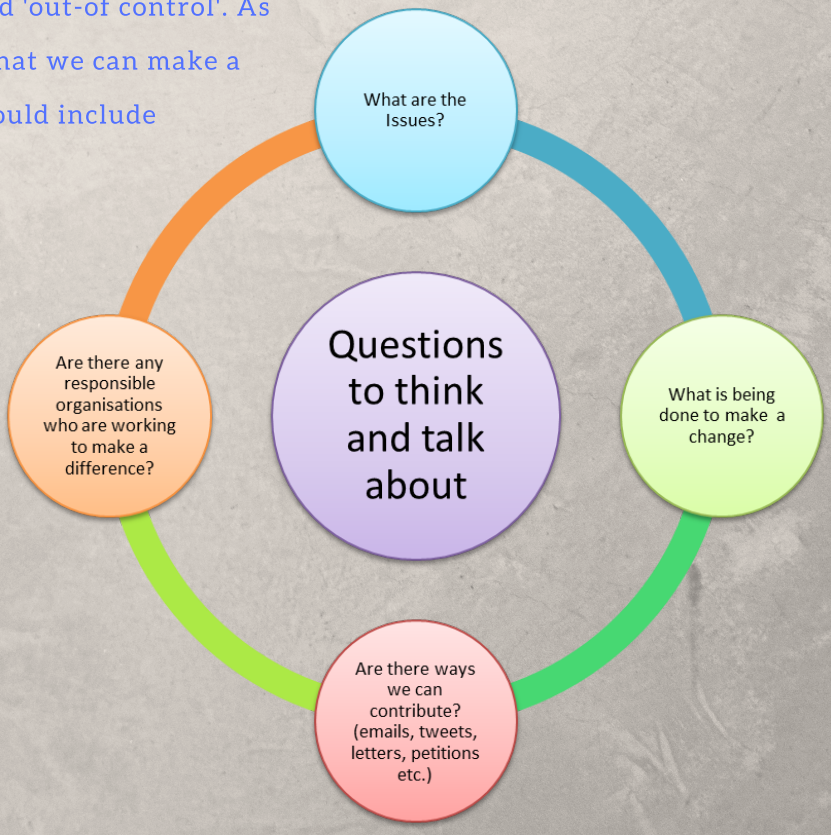


Theme #3
Empowerment



EMPOWERMENT

We are often concerned or feel strongly about big issues in society, but we can also feel powerless and 'out-of control'. As adults we can help children understand that we can make a difference to issues we care about. This could include considering the following questions:



Tackling the Issue
A Step by Step Guide

1. Choose a news story:

This could be one that the young person is interested in, or one that you would like to discuss with them.

Ask them how they feel about the story- one way to do this is with emotion cards like the example opposite.

Happy	Excited	Bored
Tired	Anxious	Other
Scared	Confused	Angry

2. Research it together:

This could be from a source they have found or it could be one you have chosen (or even better a mixture of both)

Consider these questions when looking at the sources:

- Who wrote the information?
- Are they reliable and what evidence do they have?
- When was it written? Is the information up to date?
- Why was it written? Is there an agenda? Is the author biased?
- Where else can you check the information?

3. Talk about it:

Share what you have found and discuss your reaction to it.

Engaging in this process and showing that you are willing is crucial!

Have either of you changed your views on the story?

How?

Why?

Take time to discuss what your "next steps" could be

The empowermwent section could offer some initial ideas for you to explore with your child.



Useful Links



The following sites can provide useful information and guidance for exploring sensitive issues and news stories:

@Snopes.com

@Fullfact.com

@BBC Newsround

@NSPCC

@Educateagaisnsthate

@IPreventblackburn.org