

June 3, 2020

As indicated in the Community Information Bulletin sent to Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board (DPCDSB) families on June 1, images and stories and the crippling and disturbing impact of anti-Black racism have dominated media over the past week. This has affected many of us profoundly, including students, families and staff members.

Students have been reaching out for support, reassurance and an opportunity to share how they are feeling. Staff are currently working to create opportunities to support students in this regard. We want to remind you that if you or your child(ren) require support you can call or email your school directly.

DPCDSB is committed to addressing anti-Black racism. We recognize that it is necessary for all members of society to actively engage in this work. Following are some tips for students and parents/guardians, as well as links to resources and supports that are available both online and in the community. We share these with you to assist families and to support students. Contents include:

1. Tips for Supporting Students through Traumatic Events
2. Tips for Parents on Media Coverage
3. Support Resources for Black Youth
4. Anti-racism Resources

➤ TIPS FOR SUPPORTING CHILDREN THROUGH TRAUMATIC EVENTS

Be reassuring.

Children take their emotional cues from the significant adults in their lives. Your reactions are important. Recognize that some children may be concerned about something bad happening to themselves, family or friends.

Be a good listener and observer.

Let children guide you to learn how concerned they are, or how much information they need. Be available to answer their questions to the best of your ability. Young children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Pay attention to changes in their behavior or social interactions.

Monitor the news.

Images and footage can become overwhelming, especially if watched repetitively. Young children may not be able to distinguish between images on television and their personal reality. Older children may choose to access media. Be available to discuss what they see and to help put it into perspective.

Highlight compassion and humanity.

Large-scale events often generate a tremendous outpouring of caring and support from around the country and world. Focus on the help and hopeful thoughts being offered to those affected by other people.

Maintain as much continuity and normalcy as possible.

Allowing children to deal with their reactions is important but so is providing a sense of normalcy. Routine family activities can help children feel more secure and better able to function.

Prioritize family time.

Being with family is always important in difficult or sad times. Doing things together reinforces children's sense of stability and connectedness.

Ask for help if you or your children need it.

Staying connected to your community can be extremely helpful. It may also be important to seek additional support from a mental health professional to cope with overwhelming feelings.

Communicate with your school.

Children directly impacted may be under a great deal of stress that can be very disruptive to learning. Your school social worker, psychologist or counselor can also provide extra support.

Be aware of your own needs.

Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief, and anger. Talking to friends, family members, religious officials and mental health counselors can help. It is important to let your children know you are sad. You will be better able to support your children if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner.

Get appropriate sleep, nutrition and exercise.

Adapted from ©SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

➤ TIPS FOR PARENTS ON MEDIA COVERAGE

While the media can help inform and educate you and your children about the recent events, media coverage, unfortunately, also has the potential to upset and confuse. As parents, you can protect your children by helping them understand media coverage while limiting their exposure to distressing images.

Understanding Media Exposure

- Media coverage can produce increased fears and anxiety in children and teens.
- The more time children/teens spend watching coverage of the tragic event, the more likely they are to have negative reactions.
- Graphic images and news stories of chaos and injury is especially upsetting to children.
- Very young children may not understand that the coverage and repetition of images of the events is a replay. They may think the event is continuing to happen or is happening again.

What Parents Can Do to Help

- Limit your children's exposure to media coverage.
- The younger the child, the less exposure they should have.
- You may choose to eliminate all exposure for very young children.
- Play their favorite shows or movies instead.
- Consider family activities away from television, radio, or internet.
- Watch and discuss with children/teens
- Watch what they watch.
- Discuss the news stories with them, asking about their thoughts and feelings about what they saw, read, or heard and correct any misunderstandings or confusion.
- Ask older children and teens about what they have seen on the internet or what they have heard through social media technologies, in order to get a better sense of their thoughts, fears, concerns, and point-of-view.

Seize Opportunities for Communication

- Use newsbreaks that interrupt family viewing or images as opportunities to open conversation. Be available to talk about children’s feelings, thoughts, and concerns, and reassure them of their safety and of plans to keep them safe.

Monitor Adult Conversations

- Be careful of what you and other adults say about the events in front of the children; children often listen when adults are unaware and may misunderstand what they hear.
- You may want to share positive media images, such as reports of individuals helping those in need.
- Reassure your children/teen that many people and organizations are working to help. This will give them a sense that adults are actively taking steps to protect those that are currently suffering.
- Educate yourself further regarding anti-Black racism, so you can better support your children and the conversation. Following are some resources that you may find helpful.

Adapted from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

The following is a collection of healing and support resources for Black youth shared by the Black Community Action Network (BCAN). Content includes:

1. Black Therapeutic Supports & Trauma Informed Grounding Techniques
2. Black Support Phone Lines
3. Black Legal Resources & Community Services
4. Affirming Black Content
5. Music for Black Healing/Affirmation/Grief/Crying/Dreaming; Playlists
6. [Resources for Black Healing and Support, Greater Toronto Area](#)

Anti-racism resources

- [The Call to Address Racism in Our Hearts and Communities](#), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.
- [Experts Encourage Parents to Speak to Children About Anti-Black Racism, Police Brutality](#), Advice from Professor Carl James
- [Talking to kids about race](#), from National Geographic, includes advice for very young children.
- [Beyond the Golden Rule](#): A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice, a toolkit from Teaching Tolerance that spans ages 2-17.
- [A Kids Book About Racism](#), by Jelani Memory

In addition to the above, if you would like to speak with school support staff, or connect your child with a school Social Worker, Child and Youth worker, chaplaincy lead or other member of our DPCDSB support team, please do not hesitate to reach out to your school principal.

May God continue to bless you and your family now and always.

Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board
Communications & Community Relations