**How to have Tough Conversations with Peers, Families, and Youth**

**Gentle Reminder:** You are going to make mistakes; we are all human so don’t let the fear stop you from having these tough conversations.

In conversations with families and caregivers facing hard times:

* be empathetic
* listen actively
* validate their feelings
* offer specific support where possible
* avoid making assumptions or giving unsolicited advice.

Instead, consider asking open-ended questions to understand their needs and let them know you are there to listen and support them through the challenging situation.

**Here are specific examples of these strategies in action:**

**Start with empathy:** Begin by acknowledging the difficulty of their situation and expressing your concern for their well-being. Perhaps you could share that there is a lot going on and you offer to share how you are currently fairing as a way to connect.

**Active listening:** Pay full attention, maintain eye contact, and let them share their experiences without interruption.

**Validate their feelings:** Use phrases like "It's understandable to feel overwhelmed" or "This must be a very tough time for you."

**Ask open-ended questions:** Instead of making assumptions, ask questions like "How are you coping with this?" or "What kind of support do you need right now?"

**Offer specific help:** Don't just say "let me know if you need anything"; instead, suggest concrete actions like "Would you like me to help with grocery shopping?" “Do you need me to help with transportation to/from school/child center?” or "Can I take your pet for a walk?"

**Respect their boundaries:** Don't pressure them to talk if they're not ready and be mindful of their privacy. Let them know that you are there as a support.

**Be patient:** Difficult situations can take time to navigate, so be patient and understanding. Provide additional opportunities to hold feelings, ask questions, and share.

**What to avoid:**

**Minimizing their struggles:** Don't say things like "It's not that bad" or "Everyone goes through tough times."

**Giving unsolicited advice:** Unless specifically asked, avoid offering solutions without fully understanding their situation.

**Comparing to others:** Don't compare their experience to someone else's situation.

**Making promises you can't keep:** Be realistic about what you can offer to help and the timeline in which these supports may be facilitated.

Resources related to responding to Immigration Raids

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| We Have Rights | <https://www.wehaverights.us/> | We Have Rights has short videos on what to do during encounters with ICE and information on completing an emergency plan. This can help clients, volunteers and staff learn more about their rights in the United States. |
| ICIRR Family Support Network and Hotline | <https://www.icirr.org/fsn> | Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights runs the Family Support Network and Hotline. Immigrants and families can all 1-855-435-7693 to report ICE activities, request support to locate someone in ICE custody, connect with an immigration attorney as well as other assistance. |