

Guidance for Talking to Kids about the Pro-Trump Mob and Violence Against The US Capitol and US Democracy

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I based these talking points heavily on guidance found at [How To Talk To Your Kids As DC Protests Turn Violent](#), which presents a framework (PEARLS) for talking to kids about terroristic events. These are *draft* talking points - please improve, enhance, specify, and evolve!

<p>PEARLS of wisdom guidance for talking to kids about terroristic events</p> <p>Drs. Laurie and Fred Zerlinger</p>	<p>Example language for the terroristic events of 1/6/2021</p>
<p>P is for Prepare</p> <p>Before discussing the events at the Capitol with your children, decide what you think they need to know, and plan out how you're going to explain it at an age-appropriate level. "They don't need every detail," says Fred.</p>	<p>Kid-facing summary of today's events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Today, our Senators and Representatives gathered to officially "count" the votes from our November election. They don't actually count the votes; that happened back in November in all the 50 states where Americans voted. As you know, the people voted Joe Biden as our next President. Today's "count" is more like a ceremony, or tradition, where our national representatives acknowledge the votes and officially note that Biden won the presidency. • As the Senators and Representatives began to count, a large crowd, or mob, of pro-Trump supporters began to surround and climb the capitol building. They advanced past security officers and entered the building without permission. Some even broke windows to enter. The Senators and Representatives needed to evacuate. • This is a very scary event for a few reasons. First, though it is always okay for us to peacefully protest in this country, it is not okay for a mob to violently attack a group of people, including our Representatives and Senators. It is additionally damaging because the mob interrupted the counting of our votes. This means that they were trying
<p>E is for Explain</p> <p>If your child wants to know why everyone keeps talking about this, tell them, but keep it simple and on their level. "I would probably give them an explanation that was only two or three sentences and see if that satisfies them," says Laurie.</p> <p>If it seems like your kid isn't getting what you're saying, as them to break it down for you. "You cannot assume that what you say is understood, unless you check," says Fred.</p>	

	<p>to disrupt our election and to stop the government from formally recognizing Biden’s upcoming presidency. In our country, it is very important that leadership changes happen peacefully. Otherwise, we may not be able to vote in new leaders without constant fights and threats. Our country has been an international model for what it looks like for people to choose their leaders, and for those choices to be honored and carried out peacefully. It is also very scary that our outgoing President, Donald Trump, in many ways encouraged this kind of violence by using his words and actions to promote challenges to the election he lost. Even today, he spoke in front of the mob just an hour before they took the capitol and encouraged them to show “strength” - this kind of language encouraged people to take the terrible actions they did today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Another thing that’s important to share is that these mob members, who were mostly white, were treated very differently than Black Lives Matters protesters were treated just six months ago in the same city. Today’s violent, mostly white protestors faced less opposition and less violent treatment than BLM protesters. Today’s events serve as a painful reminder of the persistent extent to which unjust, unequal, and inhumane racism continues to harm our society. • Thankfully, police, the national guard, and others were able to disperse the pro-Trump crowd, and at around 8pm, the Representatives and Senators gathered back together to continue the vote.
<p>A is for Answer If your child asks the same question more than once, try to use the same explanation each time you respond. “You’re usually better off using the same answer you used before so the child realizes there is certainty in it,” Fred notes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions as best you can. However, don’t be afraid to say that you don’t know an answer; or that a question may be too complex or challenging to answer right now, but that you will follow up with the child later on.

R is for Reassure

According to Laurie, one of the best things parents can do for a child who is concerned about external violence is simply reassure them that the grownups are doing their best to keep them safe.

Don't make guarantees, but remind them that there are more good people in the world than bad.

L is for Listen

"Just let your kids talk," says Laurie. Take some mental notes while they go on. The things they keep repeating are the issues they're confused about and that you can clarify later. Be mindful of the areas that they're avoiding too, because maybe you need to fill in an important detail that they've totally missed.

S is for Safeguard

If your child is worried that similar events will take place in your community, take a moment to talk about all the things grownups are doing to prevent that from happening. "Make sure we're reminding the children of all the safeguards in place to protect them," says Laurie.

Unfortunately, we can't guarantee this is going to end peacefully or quickly. But we can guarantee our children that we will always be there to listen to them, and hug them tight.

- We do need to take today's events seriously. However, we can find confidence in the fact that eventually our police, national guard, and others were able to dispel the mob; that our Representatives and Senators resumed the vote, showing their commitment to our democracy; and that the vast majority of politicians, newscasters, and other leaders were united in condemning these actions, regardless of their political party.
- That said, I do want to be honest with you that today was a wake-up call for many Americans, including me, that we must be active and vigilant in defending our democracy. It is so important that we protect our right to choose our leaders and to make sure that our votes are honored with peaceful transitions of power; and that we continue to advocate and fight for racial equity and justice.

