

# Post Election Guide

For parents and caregivers



This resource was prepared by Children's Defense Fund  
for use by Children's Defense Fund Action as part of its  
"Voting Rights Are Children's Rights" campaign.

# How to Talk to Your Children After the Mid-Term Election

Voting is one of the most powerful ways we advocate for the next generation, but it doesn't end when the polls close. When you cast your ballot with your children's future in mind, you're making a promise to them, even if they don't fully understand it yet.

Our children don't need us to have all the answers about politics. They just need to know that whatever the results are their families are still safe, steady, and together.

The next step is just as important: showing up for them again once the results are in. However the election unfolds, your children will be watching how the adults around them respond, and that response teaches them far more than any speech or headline will. This guide is here to help you turn that moment, win or lose, into an opportunity to model resilience, curiosity, and care. Using the tips below, take a moment to refresh your post-election conversations with your children.

# 5 Ways to Talk to Your Children After the Election

## 1. Share the wins and discuss the losses.

Elections rarely go all one way. Take time to name the wins with your children: the candidates, ballot measures, or policies that reflect progress and the values your family cares about. Celebrating those moments, even small ones, helps children see that change is possible and that their voice, and their vote one day, can matter.

At the same time, be honest about the losses. You don't have to pretend disappointment away or shield your children from it entirely. Naming a loss out loud and talking through what it means and what comes next teaches children that setbacks are part of the process, not the end of it. As a family, you can keep showing up for the values you care about: dignity, hope, and joy, as well as fairness, and making sure every child, including you and your own, are seen and valued.

**Sample response:** Some things we were hoping for happened, and some didn't. Let's talk about both.

What's one result that made you feel hopeful? What's one result that felt disappointing? It's okay to feel both at the same time.

***Three questions to invite conversation:***

- What's one result from this election that made you feel hopeful or excited?
- What's something that didn't go the way we hoped? How does that feel?
- When something we care about doesn't win right away, what do you think we can still do?

**2. Their feelings are valid, whatever they are.**

Children don't process big news on a predictable timeline. One child might seem completely fine at breakfast and then break down at bedtime three days later. Another might have big feelings for an hour and then go back to normal. There's no right way for a child to react, and our job isn't to manage their emotions but to make room for them. Listen without rushing to fix anything, and let them know other children and grown-ups are working through similar feelings too. It also helps to name your own feelings, in age-appropriate ways, and show them how you're taking care of yourself.

***Sample response:*** It's okay to feel however you're feeling right now, even if it's confusing or you're not sure what it is. You don't need the right words right now. I'm feeling a lot too, and I'm here whenever you want to talk, or just sit together.

### ***Three questions to invite conversation:***

- How are you feeling about everything going on right now?
- Have you heard anyone at school talking about the election? What did that feel like for you?
- Is there a feeling you're having that's hard to put into words?

### **3. Reassure them that life goes on.**

No matter the outcome, your household rhythm won't change tomorrow morning: breakfast, school, work, bedtime. Naming that out loud matters more than it might seem. When children are anxious, concrete reassurance about their day-to-day world helps ground them faster than abstract comfort does. Let them know they are safe, they are loved, and the people who take care of them aren't going anywhere.

***Sample response:*** No matter what happened, tomorrow we're still going to have breakfast, you're still going to school, and I'm still going to be right here. Our family isn't going anywhere. You are safe, and you are loved.

### ***Three questions to invite conversation:***

- What's something you're looking forward to this week?
- Is there anything about tomorrow, or the next few days, that's making you feel worried?
- What helps you feel safe when things around us feel uncertain?

#### **4. Listening matters more than winning the argument.**

One thing every election makes clear is that a lot of people feel unheard on all sides. We know that talking loudly to get your point across rarely changes anyone's mind, and children know this instinctively from arguments with siblings and friends. Therefore, model something different for them, for example: slow down, listen first, and try to understand rather than judge. You don't have to agree with someone to hear them out.

*Ask your children what they think it looks like to really listen to someone they disagree with. You might be surprised by their answer.*

**Sample response:** Some people are happy about the results, and some people are really upset, and both of those feelings make sense to the people having them. It's okay to disagree with someone and still care about how they feel. What do you think it looks like to really listen to someone, even when you see things differently?

#### ***Three questions to invite conversation:***

- Do you know anyone who might feel differently about the election than we do?
- What do you think it might feel like when someone doesn't listen to you?
- What message would you want to tell the world about listening to the voices of children specifically on issues that mostly affect them?

#### **5. Their voice matters. Let them use it.**

This is a chance to show your children that caring about

their community doesn't stop when the votes are counted. It's something that we practice every day. Depending on their age, that might mean writing a letter to a local leader, joining a school or community project, or simply talking through what they'd like to see change. Helping children find a small, concrete action rather than simply watching from the sidelines turns anxiety into agency and reminds them that they, too, have a role in building the world you're voting for.

**Sample response:** Voting is one way grown-ups speak up for what they care about, but it's not the only way. What's something you care about in our community? Let's think of one small thing we could do together, like writing a letter or joining a project, to help make it happen.

***Three questions to invite conversation:***

- If you could change one thing to help other kids or families, what would it be?
- What's one small thing we could do together this week to help with something you care about?
- If you were to share your message on social media or TV, what chant or song about how you and other children will save the world would you create?

# Post Election Guide for Parents & Caregivers



## Quick Sheet

### After the Election

Whatever the results, your children are watching how you respond. Use these five conversation starters to help them feel safe, heard, and ready to keep caring about their community.



1



Share the wins and discuss the losses.

Name the progress worth celebrating and be honest about the setbacks. Both are part of moving forward together.

Ask: "What's one result that made you feel hopeful, and one that felt hard?"

2



Their feelings are valid, whatever they are.

Children process big news on their own timeline. Listen without rushing to fix it, and name your own feelings too.

Ask: "How are you feeling about everything going on right now?"

3



Reassure them that life goes on.

Breakfast, school, and bedtime stay the same tomorrow. The work continues too, and so does your family's safety and love.

Ask: "What's something you're looking forward to this week?"

4



Listening matters more than winning the argument.

Slow down, listen first, and try to understand rather than judge, even when you disagree.

Ask: "What do you think it looks like to really listen to someone?"

5

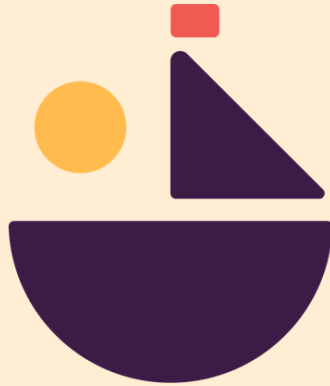


Their voice matters too. Let them use it.

Help your child(ren) find one small, concrete way to act, like a letter, a project, or a conversation, so caring turns into agency.

Ask: "What's one thing we could do together this week to help?"

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