

# TIPS FOR TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT LAYOFFS

## 01 Give Your Kids Credit

It's common and understandable for parents to want to protect their children from hard things like layoffs. What sometimes happens as a result is parents may underestimate their children's ability to perceive and receive information. Children are perceptive and usually pick up on more than we give them credit for. They may notice a shift in the mood at home or mom/dad no longer leaving for work in the morning and not acknowledging that these changes are happening may only cause them more confusion in the long run.

## 02 Plan Ahead

Before talking to your kids, ask yourself what you would like to get out of the conversation. How would you like to feel after the conversation? How would you like your kid(s) to feel? Use your answers to these questions to help determine what you do want to share and what does not need to be shared right away or at all. If you have a partner, it may be helpful to talk through these parameters with them ahead of time.

## 03 Take Age Into Account

When preparing for and having the conversation, keep your kid(s)' age(s) in mind. Phrases like "got fired" or "laid off" may not be in a younger child's vocabulary so be aware of using language that they understand. An older kid might also be aware through media or word of mouth of the large number of layoffs that have been happening recently, so they may have more intricate questions. If you have children of multiple ages with larger age differences, you could consider having the conversations separately or offering individualized space for each child to voice their own questions in their own way.

## 04 Self-Regulate

Particularly before the conversation with your kids (this does not mean you can't show emotion when talking to them!). You will feel much more grounded in what you want to say if you take a few moments to emotionally regulate beforehand.

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## 05 Be Authentic & Vulnerable

It's okay to share and show that you're upset, angry, or sad. Be sure to emphasize this key difference: that mom/dad being upset about not having a job is not the same as mom/dad being upset at you (your child). Children can't necessarily distinguish that on their own and hearing it from you will help them better understand what is going on. It is healthy and helpful for kids to see their parents show emotions and then respond to and move through those emotions in adaptive ways. Note: there is a difference between showing your kids your emotions and relying on them for emotional support. Don't forget to check in with how they're feeling too.

## 06 Answer Their Questions

Whether they have questions immediately or later, let them know that they are allowed to ask and you are here to answer what you can. Most often, kids are seeking security and want to know if their parents will be okay and if they/their life will be okay. It's also okay to say "I don't know" and to remind them that figuring out the details is your responsibility and you are doing the best you can to do that.

## 07 Keep What You Can Consistent

Change is inevitable when job loss is involved and change can feel very disruptive and unsettling to kids. Helping them identify the impacts of the change and move through it can be particularly helpful and where you can, try to maintain consistency. Did your family have pizza dinner together every Wednesday before the job loss? Keep that same routine throughout this transition. Avoid introducing any big, new, unnecessary changes while your family unit is already going through this particular change if you can.

## PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE...

**“Jacob said his dad lost his job. What does that mean?”**

**You Might Say:** *That means Jacob’s dad won’t be going to work every day for now. Not having a job for a little while is something a lot of adults go through, and it’s okay. Right now, I’m still going to work every day, and if that ever changes, your mom and I will talk to you about it and make a plan together. No matter what, we will always take care of you.*

**“Are you mad about not going to work anymore?”**

**You Might Say:** *I do feel sad and frustrated because I liked my job, and things will be different for a little while. But even though I have big feelings about this, I want you to know that I am okay, and my feelings are not your responsibility. I love you, and no matter what, we are in this together.*

**“Are we going to have to move out of our house?”**

**You Might Say:** *I’m so glad you asked me this—it must feel scary to wonder about this on your own. Right now, our house is still our home, and we are doing everything we can to keep things as stable as possible. If anything ever needs to change, we will figure it out as a family. Is there anything else on your mind?*

**“Why do people lose their jobs?”**

**You Might Say:** *That’s a really good question. People lose jobs for lots of reasons—sometimes a company has to make changes, sometimes jobs go away, and sometimes people decide to leave to find something new. Losing a job can feel really hard, but it doesn’t mean someone did something wrong. No matter what, grown-ups find ways to take care of their families, and we will always make sure you’re okay.*