

Relationships during election season

Find different ways to maintain your relationships during and after an emotional election

Many of us have been feeling a lot of anxiety, stress and uncertainty this election season. Differing viewpoints and hopes for the outcome can create tension and strain within your relationships. As heightened emotions effect our day-to-day lives, it's important to find ways to care for yourself and others during this time.



Caring for yourself

During an election year, you might find yourself struggling with feelings of uncertainty about what is to come. If the results aren't what you are hoping for, you may find yourself feeling stuck in what the future may bring. These feelings are normal.

This is the time to reach into your toolkit of things that have helped you ease feelings of stress or anxiety. Remember to keep an eye on the basics that keep your body healthy. This includes things like drinking water, being active and sleeping enough. If you sense yourself getting caught up in the constant stream of news and social media, be sure to take a break. Think about different activities that can replace some of that time, such as listening to an album you love from start to finish, trying out a new recipe or checking out a park you've never been to before.

Be sure to take time to actually feel your feelings and learn the difference between feelings and emotions. Emotions are alerts, while feelings help decide what action to take, if any. Recognizing and understanding the difference between the two can help you move through election season with better self-awareness.



Caring for your relationships

As you care for yourself, it's important to share and express emotions with others. Connect with friends and family you feel comfortable with who might feel similarly. Maybe they can serve as accountability buddies. They could remind you to step away from social media or make sure you're doing the things that help you stay healthy. Maybe this is something you can do for someone else. Seek new situations to experience to expand your understanding of new things. This can help push you out of your comfort zone and help you to keep learning.

It can be tougher to navigate conversations with those who feel differently from you. Sometimes you might feel these conversations are not going to be productive. It could be necessary to take a

break from them. Or you might have to set boundaries on the types of conversations you'll participate in or be around. This can be important to ensure that your own needs for respect and safety are met. At times, it might feel important to reach out and have these conversations. You might want to express why you feel a certain way and why it matters to you.

It's important to keep in mind that conversations work best when both sides want to listen and better understand one another. Try to be realistic in your expectations. Admit you have biases, and work to uncover what they might be. You might not win a dramatic change in someone's opinion with a single conversation, but challenging your own biases may help you to understand the other perspective. Expand your sense of empathy and attempt to listen without judgment and be careful to ensure your body language is open and receptive.

Caring for your community

When your candidate, party or cause loses an election, it can be disappointing. It can even impact your sense of belonging and sense of safety.

In these moments, take some time to think about what makes you feel inspired. What people, organizations and efforts give you hope for the future? No matter who won the election, these efforts are likely to continue. And there are still many opportunities for you to have an impact.

You could volunteer, donate, organize or get involved in mutual aid. You might want to focus on your immediate neighborhood, city or state. This can be a way to do direct, tangible good today. Or you could focus on larger efforts that lay the groundwork for change you hope to see in the future. If you feel frustrated by things you wish you had done differently this time around, like making sure your ballot is counted or pitching in for your candidate, channel that into what you can do today. Think about how you can prepare for the next election. If you're feeling helpless or overwhelmed, getting engaged can provide a valuable sense of control, meaning and impact.



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