



STATEMENT FROM FIRST 8 MEMPHIS ON HELPING CHILDREN UNDERSTAND THE COMPLEXITIES OF THIS MOMENT

We are in a difficult place. We are navigating a global pandemic - that is killing black and brown bodies at a devastatingly alarming rate more than any other group. We may have lost our job, had our hours reduced and/or are navigating working from home.

We are also fighting for black lives. A fight this country has had for 400 years. This past week we have learned the names of black folks killed at the hands of white people – Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and now George Floyd. While we know their names, there are countless others we must honor and hold in our heart. Protests across the country are calling for justice.

The discrimination, prejudice, stress and trauma we experience as adults are experienced by the children in our lives – our very children, and the children we care for in their homes, childcare, classrooms, libraries, and doctors offices. First 8 Memphis is working to create a high-quality comprehensive early care and education system for young children and their families. Part of our work is to help parents and all caregivers give and do what they can to help children thrive.

It may feel difficult to know how children can thrive in the midst of a pandemic and important social movements, but there are ways:

- **Care for yourself:** Children look to the adults in their life to tell them how safe they are. Parents and caregivers model how to handle stress and how to care for oneself. Do what helps you care for yourself – listen to music, pray, meditate, and reach out to family and friends – so that you can be there for the children you care about.
- **Tell children what is going on:** People think that children are too young to understand what is happening in the world. But they know. Babies know when their caregiver is not responding to their cry, toddlers know when they are being shushed because their caregiver is stressed, and older children obviously know when their parents are stressed. We need to explain to kids – in a way they would understand – what is going on. It is also important to be honest and explain that you may not know when things will get better, but that you will be there for them as best you can.
- **Let children know what to expect:** One thing we know about children is routine helps them know what to expect from the adults in their lives. Young children, especially those under the age of five, thrive on routine. Routine helps them understand what is happening next. It helps them feel calmer and more in control. If you have a routine to read to your children every night, keep going. If your children nap, pillow fight or watch a certain tv show every day, try to continue with that. Help them know what to expect.

The children in our lives are future leaders in our community.

First 8 Memphis is committed to making our community stronger and more equitable for all children and families. We stand with Memphis during this time of urgency and need for real systems change!

