

Talking to children and young people about the war in Ukraine

A guide for Parents/Carers

As much as we want to protect our children and young people it is likely that they have seen and heard of the events in Ukraine. The words 'war' 'invasion' and 'attack' and the violent and upsetting images being shown in the media are going to be frightening for all children, particularly those who have experienced traumatic pasts.

It is possible that children will be trying to make sense of this information by asking questions. Our own emotions can influence how we respond to these questions sensitively and appropriately.

This document aims to help you consider what information to share and how you can help your child/young person understand what is going on. Links to other helpful resources are also shared.

Take care of yourself

- Whilst watching or reading the news can help keep us informed, limiting news intake can help to reduce anxiety.
- The emotions that you're feeling can be overwhelming. Remember to take time for things that you enjoy.
- Talk to someone you trust about your thoughts and feelings.



Listen to your child/young person

When listening

- **Stay honest** – if you don't know the answer, that is OK.
- **Keep it simple** - consider the child/young person's age and stage of development.
- **Normalise all feelings** - there are no "bad" or "wrong" emotions.
- **Follow their lead** – respond to questions and give them the space to ask.
- **Be mindful of language**- avoid phrases like "calm down" or "stop worrying".

Consider how to help them feel safe

- **Maintain routine**- consistency helps in times of uncertainty. If change is unavoidable, communicate this change in advance and give your child time to adjust.
- **Check social media engagement**- the current events are trending across social media platforms and are easily accessible by children and young people.
- **Watch where they are getting their news**- Not all the information is accurate or appropriate.



- **Make time for fun**- encourage children to take part in activities that help them feel calm e.g., spending time with friends, painting, swimming.



Empower you child/young person

Despite the devastation there is so much help, care and love being demonstrated around the world. Help your child consider these and think about what they can do to help. Examples can be found [here](#).



Helpful Links

Newsround have explained some of the key terms being used to talk about the war in Ukraine. The link can be found [here](#).

Newsround also have a page on their website titled 'Advice if you are upset by the news'. It shares some tips about what to do if children/young people are feeling upset about what they have seen/heard. This can be found [here](#).

[Time for Kids](#) – Shares news for children – it gives you the opportunity to input the child's age to find the most appropriate material.

Credit and Thanks to:

EDPSY - <https://edpsy.org.uk/blog/2022/talking-to-children-and-young-people-about-war-in-ukraine/>

Dr MDC - <https://www.drmdc.co.uk/>

TISUK – www.traumainformedschools.co.uk

Save the Children - [How to talk to children about war](#) | [Save the Children UK](#)

Barnardo's Ireland - [talking-to-children-about-war.pdf](#) (barnardos.ie)

BPS- [Supporting children to manage anxiety over war, conflict and crises](#) | [BPS](#)



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