



Safeguarding newsletter: How to speak about the news, ongoing conflicts and difficult topics with your child

November 2023

Dear parents/ carers,

The recent and disturbing events in Israel/ Gaza Strip has caused grave concern around the world. Talking to children about what's going on in the news can be challenging, particularly when it involves conflict.

With such high volumes of information being shared in the news and on social media, it is likely that our children are seeing and hearing fragments of information that they may have questions about, or may even begin to worry about.

We've attached a 7 point guide to help you in talking to your child about difficult topics, such as war. We understand that this may be a topic that you do not want to raise with your child, and that is perfectly OK, but hope that the advice below can act as a support for you, if needed.

Knowledge and understanding

Feeling like you don't have a full understanding of current affairs, and the subsequent fear of exposing a gap in knowledge in front of your child may make you feel nervous or want to avoid talking about conflict that is happening.

It's important to remember that you are not required to have all of the answers to the questions that your child might ask and also to be aware that there isn't always necessarily going to be a 'right' answer.

The online space and social media will almost certainly drive much discussion, but please also bear in mind the likelihood that a lot of social media posting may be driven by AI and not real people, therefore many posts may not be what they represent. There is an important and vital need to support this online awareness, especially at this time.

If you would like any further support, please do not hesitate to contact us at school, or visit our safeguarding pages on the school website.

Kind Regards,

The Safeguarding Team

Here are 7 tips for talking to children about difficult topics, such as war:

1. Find out what they know and how they feel



Choose a time and place when you can bring it up naturally and your child is more likely to feel comfortable talking freely. Try to avoid talking about the topic just before bedtime. With younger children, drawing, stories and other activities may help to open up a discussion.

Children can discover the news in many ways, so it's important to check in on what they're seeing and hearing. It's an opportunity to reassure them and potentially correct any inaccurate information they might have come across whether online, on TV, at school or from friends.

It's important not to minimise or dismiss their concerns. If they ask a question that might seem extreme to you, such as "Are we all going to die?", reassure them that is not going to happen, but also try to find out what they have heard and why they are worried about that happening. If you can understand where the worry is coming from, you are more likely to be able to reassure them.

Be sure to acknowledge their feelings and assure them that whatever they are feeling is natural. Show that you're listening by giving them your full attention and remind them that they can talk to you or another trusted adult whenever they like.

2. Keep it calm and age-appropriate



You know your child best. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety.

3. Spread compassion, not stigma



Conflict can often bring with it prejudice and discrimination, whether against people or a country. When talking to your children, avoid labels like "bad

people” or “evil” and instead use it as an opportunity to encourage compassion, such as for the families forced to flee their homes.

4. Focus on the helpers



It's important for children to know that people are helping each other with acts of courage and kindness. Find positive stories, such as the first responders assisting people, or young people calling for peace.

5. Close conversations with care



As you end your conversation, it's important to make sure that you are not leaving your child in a state of distress. Try to assess their level of anxiety by watching their body language, considering whether they're using their usual tone of voice and watching their breathing.

Remind them that you care and that you're there to listen and support whenever they're feeling worried.

6. Continue to check in



As news of the conflict continues, you should continue to check in with your child to see how they're doing. How are they feeling? Do they have any new questions or things they would like to talk about with you?

If your child seems worried or anxious about what's happening, keep an eye out for any changes in how they behave or feel, such as stomach aches, headaches, nightmares or difficulties sleeping.

You can help them to deal with stress through breathing exercises...ask them about the Take 5 breathing we do in school.

7. Limit the flood of news



Be mindful of how exposed your children are to the news while it's full of alarming headlines and upsetting images. Consider switching off the news around younger children. Also consider how you talk about the conflict with other adults if your

children are within hearing distance.

As much as possible, try to create positive distractions like playing a game or going for a walk together.