

HOW DO YOU TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT WAR?

Children need to be physically and emotionally near their family and friends in times that can make them distressed and anxious. They need physical affection and comfort - a hug if young, and in individual ways when older. They also need a listening ear if the situation is tense for them or their peers.

If living away from close ones or if your child knows someone who is living in a conflict setting, talk about ways to keep in touch and how they can support their friend or family member from a distance. Children have their own agency and empowering them to support someone else can help channel their fears and worries.

- **BE CALM**

Be as calm as possible in what you say and how you act in order to create a secure environment for children. Be careful not to let your own worries distress them so they make your worry their own. Discuss the conflict with your own family and friends out of the reach of children, should you as an adult be concerned yourself.

- **GIVE SIMPLE ANSWERS**

If children worry and ask questions about what is happening, they need simple, and concrete answers. Be honest and truthful, yet at the same time do not overwhelm them or expose them to scary information. Take time to explain the situation to them in a way that is suitable to their age and developmental level. It is okay to say 'I don't know' too.

- **LIMIT EXPOSURE TO MEDIA**

Today, children even from a very young age are exposed to sometimes brutal coverage of conflicts on social media. Protect them from too much exposure to radio, tv or social media messages and try to avoid it if it is distressing. Generally, it is a good idea to limit the time spent watching news etc. to twice a day and ensure children (and adults) don't use their devices before bedtime.

- **DO THINGS YOU LIKE**

Allocate specific times with children to do things with them that they like, such as games and other stimulating activities. Develop a list of things with them that they could do in their quiet times such as reading, drawing or listening to music to help calm themselves.

