



## How to Talk to Kids About Distressing World Events

From a global pandemic to Afghanistan, and now Ukraine, 2020-2022 can fill in the chunkiest of history books. We're witnessing history in the making, and with us, our kids. Regardless of how careful we are when talking about what is happening around us, kids can sense when something is not right. As parents, we're worried about what to share and how much, in a way that is not detrimental to our children.

To support you as you navigate (yet another) world event as a parent, we've enlisted the help of [MyMama's expert](#) psychotherapist Xanthe' Schembri. In this interview, Xanthe' explains why and how we should talk to children about what's happening, how we can help them come to terms with the world around them, and signs to look out for that indicate a child may not be coping well with distressing events.

*For personal support throughout your parenting journey, check out [Xanthe's services](#) offered through [MyMama!](#)*



### Discussions & Conversations

#### 1. *Should* we talk to children about distressing world events?

We would rather prefer to talk to children about fantasies, dreams and fun stuff, yet bad things happen – so do distressing world events. We have lived through a pandemic and now through Ukraine – Russia tension. We have no control over these circumstances. Instead, we can look at such situations as an opportunity to strengthen relationships during difficult times and build children's resilience. Ultimately, this is the world they have to live in.



The best way to protect our children is to shape the lessons gained during this difficult time; both for parents and children alike. So, my answer is definitely a yes! Children look up to their parents and expect them to help them make sense of the world around them and how to deal with difficult information or to learn to cope with new challenging experiences. Parents unintentionally become protective of their children and would want to shield them off any danger, tragedies, or other negativity that can infiltrate their innocent lives. However, children are still able to pick up cues of what's happening. They can also feel the tension of what's

happening around them, which, unless explained carefully and sensitively, can breed fear, anger and anxiety, whatever the child's age.

## **2. How can we start this conversation in a safe and healthy way? Are there any effects if we choose not to talk about what is happening?**

Discussing stressful news or other world events is also challenging for adults, let alone talking to children and explaining things in a language they can understand fully and clearly. Speaking about war is probably a topic any parent would want to avoid, because, let's be honest, it is not something that one can easily digest and emotionally process.

If the news is big enough or it is affecting everyone's everyday life, then you have to talk about it. So, firstly, it is essential that as a parent, you take some time to reflect on how this is affecting you personally, the impact it has on your family and nationally or even internationally.

Imagine not explaining the lifestyle changes the pandemic brought about to your children, when they were forced to stay indoors, wear masks and be extra careful when around people.

When something is realistic and has an emblematic implication on the child's moral and psychological repercussions, but it is not talked about at home, it creates a lot of uncertainty and triggers anxiety in children. When children talk between themselves, they may be missing out on some essential and proper information leading to misunderstandings and ambiguity. By avoiding such discussions, as a parent you wouldn't be protecting your child – it can actually be dangerous for the child's emotional processing, so don't pretend it is not happening!

The biggest challenge is how to do this and how to engage in a child-oriented discussion. Basically, it depends on some crucial factors, such as the child's age, temperament and emotional sensitivity, and the message **you want to relay** along with the lessons you want your child to learn.

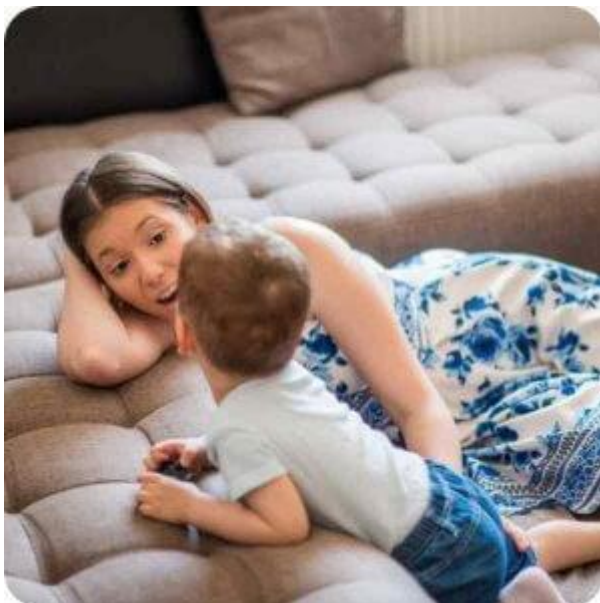


Depending on the age, as a parent, you can control the discussions by choosing the extent of detail shared, whilst supplementing this with educational activities, stories from reading books, or journaling time by listing down what is happening and the child's own processes, for better understanding.

Sometimes, informing your children about the latest developments while providing a safe space to ask and clear their thoughts is more supportive than giving them extra and unnecessary details that they would not benefit from. It is right to tell your children that there is tension within Europe right now, but you

might not want to share the extent of risks unless the child is old enough to bring such a discussion up.

Always tailor your conversations according to your child's age and developmental level by adapting your language and how to provide the information you intend to bring up with the intention of finding out how your child is feeling and thinking about it all.



– **Younger children:** they have fewer cognitive and emotional abilities to understand what's happening but through storytelling, you can still explain briefly how they can be careful if we're talking about COVID-19 precautions or how some sort of conflict is not nice in any way through playing out using some basic and relational cues, whilst encourage them to question, and to be curious.

Asking them questions, such as *"how are you feeling?"*, *"what do you make of this?"*, *"how is this affecting you?"* and *"how can I be here for you?"* is often recommended. It is equally important

that you listen to what they have to say and to allow them to set the pace and correct any misinformed thinking. Do not ask them a lot of questions, but instead provide your child with concrete and relatable information. Explain how being angry and upset about a distressing world event is absolutely natural and together come up



with ways how these feelings and emotions can be transferred otherwise and how certain actions are less favourable.



– **Older children:** Once children reach the 8 to 12 age range, they probably have access to smartphones and social media might be in the picture too. Therefore, their flow of information is unexpectedly higher than you would think. They communicate with their peers more, are more observant of their parents' and/ or siblings' emotions and may need to understand or feel the urge to know what's distressing. A single child, on the other hand, is still likely to get to know about what's happening from school, and as a parent you cannot risk your child losing trust in you by not informing them about the latest events, distressing as they are.

So equally, it is essential that you do not avoid conversations or ignore the questions they have to ask, whilst also considering news your child must have learnt from school. Check if there is anything that they want to know more about or that is unsettling them. Once again, regardless of age, you can still engage in play or other activities, but direct questioning can support them better. The idea is always to provide them with the right ground of information and space for emotional containment and follow up as necessary.



– **Teenagers:** At this age, they will definitely be informed about what's going on, yet that doesn't mean that they have all the correct information, either. Encourage them to share their fears and views on what is happening. Conversations with your teenage children do not entirely mean that you need to include all details, gruesome and graphical, but even in its simpler form, you can address their distress by providing any form of reassurance and real solutions, conveying higher emotional intelligence to the world around them.

Regardless of your child's age, ensure a safe space to help them compartmentalise their thoughts and emotions without creating excessive or unnecessary anxiety to buffer the real stress. There is nothing wrong in being transparent as long as you are aware of how your child will take it. Wherever possible, help them take any form of action to be part of the solution. If, on the other hand, your child prefers not to discuss things or doesn't have questions,

don't force them to, yet be aware whether the child is exhibiting any different behaviour than usual.

## Following the news

### **3. Should children be exposed to media (including the news)? If yes, at what age?**



At whatever age, but most importantly as the children are growing, limiting media exposure is necessary to strike the balance between knowing what's happening and being able to detach. The same thing applies to adults because it can also be too much for us to digest. Exposing children to excessive media coverage has no benefits at all. Children are not emotionally mature to digest all that they view in the media, and to differentiate what is truth or not. That said, it is not healthy to close off any access to media portals, because it can initiate further frustration and unclarity. You know your child, so ideally, you would identify what can be

helpful and not and always create opportunities to discuss things when needed.

# Big Emotions

## 4. How can we help our children come to terms with what's happening in the world – natural disasters, poverty or conflicts – and all while they're already experiencing a pandemic.

These are practical tips which can work out:



– **Don't be afraid to address it:** Not informing yourself or your children, doesn't mean nothing is happening. The same applies if you do not bring up the topic with your children as otherwise, they come to inaccurate conclusions, so instead opt to inform them and address hot topics with awareness, certain precision and in a cleverer approach by addressing the child's sensitivity and emotions wholeheartedly. This may not only help them deal with distressing world events, but also help them deal with life, enriching them with much needed life skills, values, strength and resilience above all.

– **Be strategic about timing:** Choose the right time of the day to bring up such topics. Before the child goes to bed is almost never a good idea. Also, ensure that you have enough patience and time to discuss questions, engage in play and contain any emotions as they come up. If you are not present or have no time, it would be best if you find a better day next time

– **Normalise Worries:** Show them that even you are worried, scared and uncertain about certain events as they are happening. Normalise how they are experiencing the world around them. It can be helpful to remind children that things often happen in the world that are difficult to understand, and that it's normal to be worried or concerned at these times, whilst it is right to bring up when they upset them.

– **Be open and reassuring:** One obligation every parent has is to comfort their children in upsetting moments, whether they are small personal encounters the child is experiencing or other bigger events around the world. Help them cope with their worries and support them to feel in control of these situations by putting it into context for them. Do explain the bigger picture. And if I haven't emphasised it enough, reassure your child that you are there to protect them as best as you can.

– **Find the positives:** Find time to focus on the good things the world has to offer, so don't get too immersed into the negativity only because nothing will change anyway. Highlighting potential positives within difficult news events makes them appear less scary and fosters your child's ability to oversee the world from a different perspective.

## 5. What are some signs to look out for that a child may not be coping well with distressing world events?



Prior to trying to focus on how your child is experiencing this moment, do take some time to reflect upon your situation. If you are completely distressed, ensure that you are setting enough emotional boundaries so as not to transmit your fear onto them. If your children are reacting just like you, this is another sign to take note of, which requires correcting your behaviour first. If, on the other hand, you are coping somewhat normally, you might want to look out for the below signs:



– **Sleep problems:** Observe whether your child is experiencing trouble falling asleep or show desire to staying asleep with constant difficulty to wake up, having nightmares or other sleep disturbances or irregular patterns which your child didn't exhibit before.



– **Physical complaints:** Children may complain of feeling tired, having a headache, or generally feeling unwell. You may notice your child eating too much or less than usual or come up with new ailments that are not natural for them to bring up.



– **Changes in behaviour:** A child's behaviour speaks volumes, so it is best to look out for any irregular patterns such as regression, too attached or clingy, more demanding, more nervous, less patient or disinterested in activities which have sparked interest before. Teens have the tendency to change their behaviour as they grow up, but regardless, it is still necessary to keep an extra eye.

– **Emotional problems:** Children are equally prone to experience any range of emotion as adults. Any change in their emotional being is a sign that it needs to be dealt with.

You as the parent can support and engage in a healthy conversation or play with your child, but it is also recommended to seek professional support if this escalates, or if it becomes concerning in any way.

## 6. Any other advice for concerned parents?



As hard as life can be, remind yourself of what you can control or not. The above-mentioned points as addressed are somewhat up to your stride to achieve. The rest, the ugliness of certain world events, is not and there is no reason for wasting life living in fear and apprehension.

You are yourself, the parent your children look up to. It is advisable to continue your day and life as much as possible, to give yourself and your children the space to wander, grow and live. Do not spend your days worrying, anguish, or constant fear, but instead create purpose for you and your little ones. Whilst at it, remind

yourself to learn forgiveness, develop empathy, allow yourself to process and release your own emotions, be clear and honest with yourself, maintain physical and emotional health, create a safe haven within your home, stay present and make up for the sadness by creating a better future for your own family. This is not easy, but also doable.



# Helping your kids cope with seeing distressing news online

Covid, climate change, and now the invasion of Ukraine: it can sometimes feel we are bombarded by distressing news daily. And it's not just a morning and evening bulletin – it's rolling news, phone notifications, WhatsApp, social media... That's all hard enough for us, but what about our children? How are we supposed to manage their anxieties about what they are seeing?

It is a myth that we can protect our children from the reality of the world. They may have access to all of these sources of news – and if they don't, their friends do, and they'll find out about it somehow. Kids are pretty perceptive too: if you are distressed by the news they will pick it up from you. And in any case, to hide the truth from them can just make things worse. So how do we manage our kids' emotions around scary news?

**Psychotherapist Dr Aaron Balick has some great tips for parents to help their children when they feel anxious about the news they read online or videos they come across while navigating the web.**

[Don't hide the truth from your children](#)

While they don't need to know every last detail, to pretend that everything is okay when they know differently sends mixed messages and can make children even more anxious. You can be honest and age-appropriate with your children at the same time. You are modelling how to acknowledge and handle bad news by being transparent, open, and calm.

You might say, 'I know this is a terrible thing happening and sometimes I get upset about it too. But I know it's normal to feel sad about bad things happening in the world, so when I do, I talk about it, and then see if there are ways I can help, even if just a little bit.'



## Put what they know into perspective

First, try to find out what your child knows. They might have heard the news on social media or watched distressing videos on TikTok, likely out of context. So, talk to them – for an anxious child, feeling listened to is half the job. Correct any misinformation they may have absorbed, explaining the facts at an age-appropriate level. You could suggest reliable channels they can go to, like [BBC Newsround](#). Why not sit with them and look at these resources together? Let them ask questions and answer them as best as you can – this will help to put their questions and fears into context.

- [Newsround's guide to the situation in Ukraine](#)

Teach them where to get reliable news online

If you get involved in your child's news consumption, you can set an example and show them how to be critical when reading the news. Help them distinguish between fact and rumour. Inform them about how to look for reputable news sources and be sceptical about viral social media. Use this opportunity to show them how to fact-check and let them know they can come to you for help with that.

If you are looking for a place to get started on this conversation, Own it has a [collection for children about fake news](#).

Normalise feelings of fear, sadness, and anxiety

Bad news isn't nice to hear. People are suffering, and there are real risks. It is normal to feel worried about these things and talking about those worries helps to process them. It's okay to share your own concerns too – but in a way that demonstrates you can be okay with your worries without 'freaking out.'

Let them know they are safe

If fear and anxiety is the main concern, put those concerns in perspective. While the fears are real, most of them are not an immediate danger to your child. Let them know that people are doing their best to keep us safe and that you, as their parent, are too.



If your child feels loved and listened to at home, it will give them the foundations to bear the difficulty and complexity of the outside world better. Building loving, trusting relationships is key – especially in vulnerable times. Let your child know you love them. When they come home from school tell them you've been thinking about them and are holding them in mind.

### Help them get involved

Children may be concerned about those who aren't safe: children in Ukraine, for example. This empathy is good and can be developed by looking at ways to offer support. Don't just stop them from going online, but rather get together on the internet and find ways to help or to send kind and encouraging messages. Similarly, with something like climate change – encourage your child to respond actively, by joining a local group and getting involved. Show them the good that can be done online and help them put their fears into action, so that they can amount to something productive.



### Be sensible about how news is consumed

This goes for you too! Avoid overdoing the amount of news you consume and encourage your child to do the same. Perhaps you can choose to look at news together once or twice a day and discuss it after. There is a difference between being informed and being over-stimulated.

### Ensure it's not a one-off conversation

We live in a complex and confusing world and questions are going to arise frequently. It may even be the same questions repeatedly if your child's underlying fear feels unresolved. Be sure to make yourself available and make time for those questions. The facts are important – but responding to your child's fears is key. Just saying, for example, "I know, it's scary," can do a world of good.



We all wish we lived in a perfectly safe world, but sadly, this isn't the case. And while we should make efforts to protect our children from inappropriate details and imagery, we also have a responsibility to embed them within the reality of the world in which we live. We can do that by being calm, honest, and truthful with them – while being age-appropriate in what we share. Most of all, receive your child's concerns with curiosity, acceptance, and warmth. Hopefully, that way they will be able to navigate this complex and sometimes scary world better.

## How to talk to your teenager about the invasion of Ukraine

Welcome to the *Parents' Toolkit*

**How do you explain the invasion of Ukraine to your children?**

Many parents, seeing what is happening on the news, will be asking this question, not knowing what to do for the best. Cover it up and tell them it's all going to be fine? How do you do that when it's all over social media, and Tik Tok is prompting young people to ask 'Is this World War 3?' My own youngest son asked me, 'Is it like when Germany invaded in World War II, Mum?'

So, how best to respond to the natural curiosity and growing anxiety of our children at this terrifying time?

**Reassure, but don't lie**



Young people have access to a huge amount of news information, and will already be well aware that Russia has launched a military attack on Ukraine. There is no benefit to children of any age to pretend this isn't a fact. Some reassurance about how close this is to their lives, however, will be helpful.

Maybe show them a map of Russia and Ukraine, so you can both visualise where these countries are in Europe and where you live. Tell them it is highly unlikely that they will be directly affected by the fighting and bombing that is happening in that region.



## Manage your own emotional response



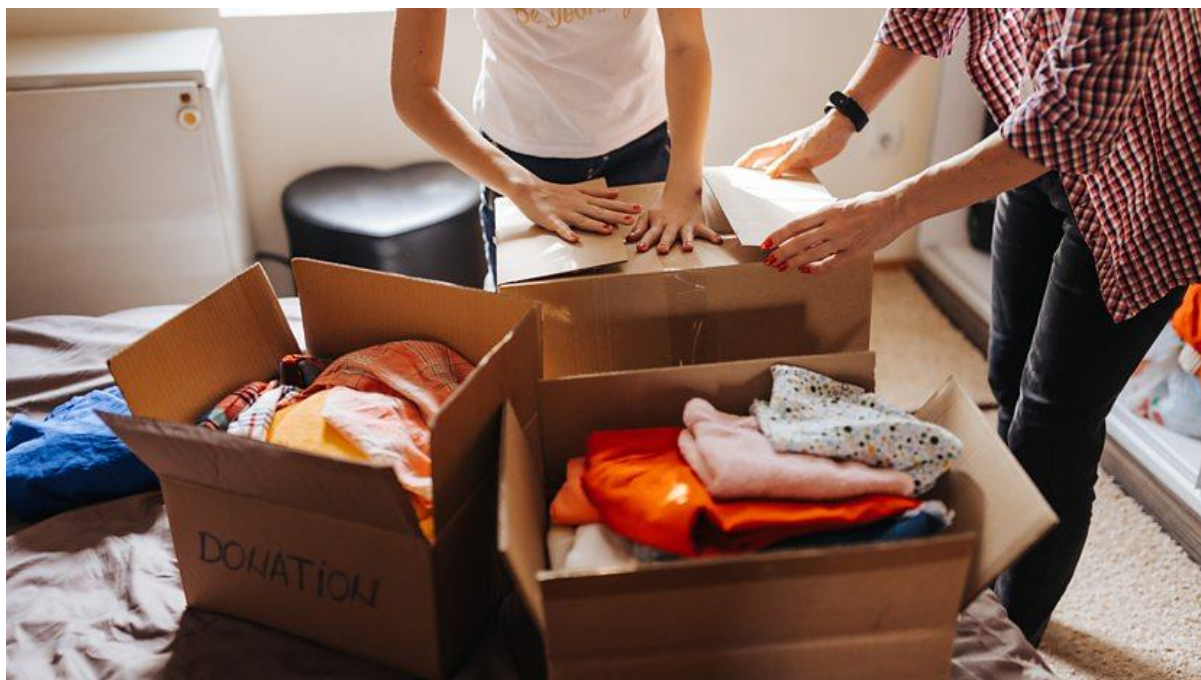
Young people are great at eavesdropping and may be listening to the conversations you are having with other adults. Be careful not to use alarming and dramatic language with others, and then change this when you speak to your own children. If they have heard you tell your friends that you are frightened and anxious, then tell them that you feel this way.

Point out the difference between your fears for other people and your fears for them. Acknowledge that it is awful to think of other innocent people being hurt or killed, and absolutely encourage empathy, but, reassure them these atrocities are rare and make sure to separate this from their own direct experience.

### **Keep normal routines going**

After any traumatic event, it is important that children and young people return to a normal routine as quickly as possible. It is no different if you are hearing about something, rather than directly experiencing it. You should try to make sure your teenager doesn't stop doing anything they would normally do. So, whether it's going to a swimming club, meeting up with friends, or just keeping to normal routines around getting up in the morning and meal times, these should continue.

## Keep a sense of control



Teenagers may want to do something to make their views about the war known to others in the world. This can help to instil a sense of control over the situation and their feelings, which is useful to managing any growing anxiety. It will also help them to connect with other people who share the same feelings and opposition to the war.

Similarly, initiatives like donating to clothing collections and volunteering to help someone else who is suffering more directly (because they have family in Ukraine) helps young people to make sense of an unbelievable sequence of events.

## Maintain stability at home

When war breaks out, the world feels uncontrollable and hard to make sense of. This may be keenly felt on the back of the pandemic when young people have had so much of their sense of safety and stability taken away from them. Without making it too obvious, take time to instil the feeling that home is a safe environment where they are not under threat. Nothing has changed at home, in school or in their immediate environment. As far as you and they are concerned, life goes on as normal. Try hard not to catastrophise about the future, as the ambiguity of 'anything could happen next' will send their anxiety soaring through the roof.

## Manage your own feelings



It might not always seem apparent, but teens do take cues from their parents and carers, and if we are constantly watching the news, anxiously scrolling our phones for the latest bulletins, and referring to the war all the time (at the expense of engaging in our own everyday routines), they will immediately pick up on this, and their anxiety will escalate.

Talk to your friends and adult family members when you need to manage your own feelings, but try to model calm and normality around your child as much as possible. When they see you coping normally, it's highly likely they will follow suit.



## Fact check and check back in



Your teenager may come to you with all kinds of 'facts' which they have picked up through social media and conversations with peers. They might quote these to you, without it being obvious that part of what they want to do is check whether you think they are true. Try asking, 'where did you hear that?' and 'tell me a bit more about that', rather than saying simply, 'that's not true'.

If they're confused about some of the language used on the news or social media, share this [\*\*handy guide from Newsround\*\*](#) with them.

Depending on the impact these 'facts' have, and this will partly depend on their age, also try going back to them a few days later. Ask if they are still thinking about it, or if they want to know anything more.

Don't worry if they seem unconcerned

Many young people will be engaged in conversations about the war in Ukraine and be worried about it. Others will simply be more interested in their position in the next football match or their forthcoming exams, and this is fine.

Don't force a conversation, or try to get them to engage in concerns about the war, if it isn't something they want to think about or discuss. Let their response and interest levels guide you.

We hope these practical tips will help you to keep communication and connection going with your teenager, through what is unquestionably a challenging time. If you have any doubt at all about whether you are doing or have said the wrong thing, it's best to be honest about it. Say something like, 'actually, it's scary, isn't it - when we don't know what's going to happen? I'm not certain either.'

It can be hugely helpful during difficult times if we, as parents and carers, can model how best to live with uncertainty – while also showing the capacity to name and talk about complex feelings.



# Talking with Kids About Global Issues and Troubling Life Events

March 7th, 2022 By [Dr. Patrick Friman](#)

[Anxiety, Coping Skills for Teens, Crisis, Kids and Teens in Crisis, Parenting Skills, Understanding Behavior](#)

With all that is going on in the world right now – from the ongoing pandemic to Russia's invasion of Ukraine – we know many parents and children are feeling overwhelmed and uneasy. Boys Town is here to help.

The following Q&A is from a Facebook Live event with Dr. Patrick Friman, Psychologist and Director of the Boys Town Center for Behavioral Health. In it, Dr. Friman discusses effective, age-appropriate ways parents can talk to their children about global issues and troubling life events. The Q&A has been edited for length and clarity. To watch the full Facebook Live interview, which has more questions and answers, [click here](#).

## Q&A with Dr. Patrick Friman:

**Question:** For parents who are actively watching the news and keeping up with the current crisis in Ukraine, there is a lot of information to digest, even for themselves, let alone to explain to their kids. Before parents talk to their kids about this topic, what advice do you have for helping them get in a good headspace to make sure they are feeling okay before they talk to their kids?

**Dr. Friman:** Well, I make a distinction between "there and then," and "here and now." Currently, we are in the here and now. And presumably, the parents that are interested in this question are in the here and now. And in their here and now they are safe and warm and comfortable in their homes; there's no threat looming outside the window. There aren't tanks rolling across the lawn. They're in a safe space. But when they venture in their imagination to there and then, things begin to get a little dire, especially if the information we have about there and then comes from any kind of a news outlet. Because news outlets specialise in the kind of news that will grab people's attention and nothing grabs people's attention more than bad news.

So, if it seems as if they're getting into the wrong headspace, they can always revert back to here and now, which is the essence of what's called mindfulness. The value of mindfulness is focusing on what's happening right now, as opposed to what may happen in the future or what happened in the past. That's not to say we shouldn't think about those things; it's just that when they trouble us, we can always come back to here and now, and there's safe space there. We can get our mind in a good position, in a good frame, and then look out at our world from there.

**Question:** What would you recommend saying to younger, elementary-age children who hear talk of war, missiles and bombings at school and maybe don't understand what that means?

**Dr. Friman:** Well, I'm not completely convinced that it's important for them to understand fully what that means, but if they are badgering their parents for an explanation, I would keep two things in mind. One is they don't understand language in the same way that you and I do. So, you need to keep the language very, very simple and there should be very little of it. Whenever you're delivering an important message to a child, you want to make sure it's very understandable. So I recommend one or two words for every year they've been alive and then onto a new topic.

So, the first thing parents want to do is use simple language and not very much of it. The second thing is it's fairly easy to get a kiddo to think about something else, especially if it's delightful or fun or tastes good. So, you take their question seriously, answer it simply and divert their attention to something that you know they'll like to think about or like to do. And you can be in and out fairly quickly.

Also, I'm just not convinced that our children are better off if they're really well informed about any of the global crises that are occurring around the world. I want them concerned with their homework. I want them concerned with their chores. I want them concerned with their friends and their family members. I want them concerned with their teddy bears. I want them concerned with what they're going to have for dinner. I want them concerned with their immediate world and not so much a part of the world they can't even find on a map.

**Question:** Let's say we have kids who have not mentioned what's going on in Ukraine at all to their parents. Would you recommend still bringing it up to them just in case they're maybe holding it in and are quietly worried about it?

**Dr. Friman:** No, I really don't think that it does anybody any good to be fully aware of all the risks that are currently present in our world to us as a species and individuals. They come up one at a time and when they come up, they should be dealt with one at a time. If a kid is sailing along in their own little world and they're happy and everything's going to be fine, we don't want to move them out of that world by telling them, "Well, don't be too optimistic about this." It's like what happens when you tell someone that we've had five really nice days of weather and their answer is, "Well, you know, it's not going to last." Okay, maybe it isn't going to last. But let's focus on the weather we're having, as opposed to starting to think about the weather we might have. So, if that kid is having nice weather, let's not ruin it for him.

**Question:** How can I tell if my child is struggling with this or other troubling life events? What warning sign should I be looking for?

**Dr. Friman:** What we want to see in the life of this kid is some kind of consistency. You know, they have school hours, they have their bedtime, they have their wake-up time. They have certainly a fixed number of chores they're expected to do. They have homework to complete, friends to talk with. And there's a routine to all of that that is pretty consistent. And the consistency itself is a message to the kid that everything's fine. If people are stressed or worried, what they're looking for is certainty. And one way you can establish certainty in the life of a kid is to keep their routines intact.

But now you're watching the kid trying to determine whether or not they are so troubled that professional help might be necessary. The place to look is any serious break in that routine. So the main elements of it involve their sleeping. Are they sleeping more or less than they usually do? Their appetite. Are they eating more or less than they usually do? Their activity levels. Are they lower or higher than they usually are? And things they formerly liked to do. Are they still doing those things or has their interest level dropped off?

If there are significant changes in any of those areas, then it might be a good idea to get some professional assistance. And that assistance, in my opinion, should first involve the pediatrician. The pediatrician is a repository of everything about children; they're the best source for a first pass at any problem. So, a parent can consult with their pediatrician to find out what they might do about their child's change in daily routine that's reflected in their worries. And if that works, if the pediatrician's advice works, that great. But if it doesn't work, then you go to the next level and consult with somebody like me and the people who work for me.

**Question:** Should parents be limiting or removing social media access for children during this time? If so, how do we explain this to them?

**Dr. Friman:** Too much of a good thing is always a bad thing. Doesn't matter what it is. And if they don't know that by now, then buy their favorite candy and tell them to eat all of it and then buy more and tell them to eat all of it until they get completely sick. And then you can explain to them: you love candy, but too much of it is just going to make you sick. You love to be online but too much online activity is just going to fill your head with stuff that doesn't belong there. That's reason number one. Reason number two is that parents are very good about warning their children to avoid bad companions and bad neighborhoods. So, if they get a sense that their child is hanging out with bad companions or is wandering into bad neighborhoods, they'll take steps right away to limit that. Guess what the internet is? It's a huge, bad neighborhood that is filled with bad companions. So, it definitely should be limited...that's the second reason. The third thing is parents are always looking for ways to motivate their kids. One way to tell how to motivate a kid is to watch what they do. Whatever they do and do a lot of that is something they like to do. If we restrict their access to that stuff they like, until they complete stuff for us like homework or chores, then we have a motivating intervention.

At a minimum, phones should be surrendered at bedtime. I know kids probably promise they won't turn their phone on when they get to bed. But if they're going to keep that promise, why would they insist on having the phone? We know from experience they're not going to do that so we want to limit the phone at bedtime. Also, I would limit access to the phone until all expectations are met. First, your vegetables, then your dessert. First, your chores, then your phone. First, your homework, then your phone.