



11<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Dear Parents and Carers,

Whilst we are geographically far away from the events, many of us are still feeling anxious about the news unfolding in regard to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Members of our school and community may be directly affected, with family or friends in the region. Even when not directly affected, watching these events can be very upsetting. Your child may not be watching the news, but they may still hear about these events in other ways, and this may cause anxiety for them too. We've included some ideas and background reading to help you handle any conversations you might have at home with your child. *Please read through these links before sharing, to ensure that you are happy that they are suitable for your family.*

### **How to talk to your child about what's happening**

No matter how carefully you manage the current environment, children are likely to pick up bits of information from their friends, from the news and from listening to adults talking around them – but they can misunderstand what they're hearing. However difficult, it is important to talk to them, in an age appropriate way, about what's happening.

### **Start by finding out what your child knows already**

Use open-ended questions to give them the chance to tell you what they think. The resource ['worrying about war'](#) gives examples of questions you could ask.

### **Tackle the news head-on and talk about it openly and calmly**

Use real words and don't shy away from the truth. Be prepared to explain and define keywords they might be hearing to help them make sense of what's going on. For example, words like invasion, missiles, sanctions, refugees etc. Use age-appropriate material such as this [Newsround resource](#), which includes definitions.

### **Stick to the facts**

Don't discuss everything you hear. For example, be careful about talking about speculation around nuclear warfare and 'World War III'.

### **Educate them about reliable sources of information**

Explain how some stories on social media may be based on rumours or inaccurate information. Encourage them to take breaks from listening to or reading the news – overexposure isn't helpful.

Use reliable news sources like Newsround, which is age-appropriate. Watch and discuss with your child this [Newsround video on spotting fake news about the crisis in Ukraine](#).

### **Encourage your child to ask questions and share their feelings**

Remember, it's OK not to have all the answers. Tell them that you'll let them know when you know more. This will be an ongoing discussion.

Allow for repetition, you might have to answer the same thing again. Younger children in particular tend to repeat themselves when they're feeling uncertain or worried.

Reassure them that they're not the only ones feeling this way and encourage them to share their feelings with you or their teacher.

### **Be a role model by reassuring them that it's normal to be concerned**

Recognise and manage your own worries first. If you notice you're feeling anxious, take some time to calm down before you decide to talk about the events with your child.

Be open about sharing your feelings with your child – e.g. I'm also finding the news a bit worrying, so I'm doing X (baking cakes, going on long walks, swimming etc.), which helps me to relax.

Encourage them to think about what they can do to relax.

## Other Resources to Support Families with Conversations Regarding Ukraine

Help for teachers and families to talk to pupils about Russia's invasion of Ukraine and how to help them avoid misinformation (**Department for Education**)

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2022/02/25/help-for-teachers-and-families-to-talk-to-pupils-about-russias-invasion-of-ukraine-and-how-to-help-them-avoid-misinformation/>

Supporting your child if they see upsetting content online about what is happening in Ukraine (Childnet)

<https://www.childnet.com/blog/supporting-your-child-with-upsetting-content/>

How To Talk To Your Child About The War In Ukraine (YoungMinds)

<https://www.youngminds.org.uk/parent/blog/top-tips-for-talking-to-your-young-person-about-the-events-in-ukraine/>

Worrying about Russia and Ukraine (Childline)

<https://www.childline.org.uk/get-involved/articles/worrying-about-russia-ukraine/>

### If your child struggles with higher levels of anxiety

Some children are naturally more anxious, such as those with existing phobias or obsessive-compulsive disorders. The current situation can make those anxieties worse. If you have relatives in the armed forces or in the regions (Ukraine, Russia, eastern/central Europe), your child might be susceptible to higher levels of anxiety.

- Get them to do activities such as counting, ordering and sorting tasks, which can help them calm down
- Encourage them to use relaxation techniques such as controlled breathing
- Help them stick to routines they know
- Look out for obsessive or compulsive behaviours and try to get ahead of them early by challenging unhelpful thoughts and assumptions
- If you're worried about your child's anxiety, **YoungMinds** is a charity dedicated to children's mental health. They have a [parents' helpline](#) for confidential, expert advice. You can reach them at 0808 802 5544

### Helplines and websites for children and young people

If your child would like to speak with someone confidentially, there are helplines and websites specifically for them.

ORGANISATION	CONTACT INFORMATION
<b>Shout</b> Free, confidential support via text, available 24/7	Text SHOUT to 85258 in the UK to text with a <a href="#">trained crisis volunteer</a> who'll provide active listening and collaborative problem-solving
<b>The Mix</b> Free confidential telephone helpline and online service that aims to find young people the best help, whatever the problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call 0808 808 4994 for free (11am to 11pm daily)</li><li>• Access the <a href="#">online community</a></li><li>• Email <a href="#">The Mix</a></li></ul>
<b>ChildLine</b> Confidential telephone counselling service for any child with a problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Call 0800 1111 any time for free</li><li>• Have an <a href="#">online chat with a counsellor</a> (9am to midnight daily)</li><li>• Check out the <a href="#">message boards</a></li></ul>