

How to talk about the hostilities in Ukraine with Children and Young People

Children and young people are talking to their peers both in school and online about what's happening in Ukraine which will be causing them concern, they may have questions or be seeking reassurance. They will have been exposed to media coverage, fake news, shocking pictures, and images from across all social media. Parents and schools are grappling with how to best approach this sensitively and without causing undue distress.

There are several common approaches emerging from a range of agencies' guidance and lesson tools, from those who have responded to this crisis. NB: This is not an exhaustive list.

- Consider your own feelings, stay calm when starting conversation. Children often mirror what you're feeling.
- Create a safe space.
- Be proactive, make time to actively listen to enable CYP to share what they know and how they feel about what they are seeing and hearing, to help them navigate the issues and challenge misinformation.
- Validate their feelings, it's not their problem to solve.
- Choose your words carefully so not to fuel fear.
- Tailor the conversation to the child, avoid too much depth, avoid over explaining the frightening aspects. We do not want to cause upset or trauma.
- Limit exposure, encourage them to take a break & do something different.
- Explore talking through disagreements, many can be resolved by listening, being heard, finding a common understanding or acknowledge its ok to disagree. Occasionally people may choose to do things that we find wrong and hurtful, we may struggle to understand our feelings and what is happening, access help from a teacher, parent or carer.
- It's okay not to have all the answers, help students do the same, as in many circumstances there is no right answer.
- Both sides of war are tragic, sadly it happens and everyone has to work together to enable a cease fire and an end to hostilities.
- Focus on how many individuals and countries around the world are working together to find solutions, they do not want the hostilities to go on and are making a stand against this and to be heard.
- Do something positive, explore practical ways to help be part of the solution which may counteract any guilt they may have for being at school, able to meet up & play with friends, and attend school.

Helpful Articles and Resources

Save the Children have a few simple steps how to talk to children about war and conflict.

<https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/how-to-explain-conflict-ukraine-to-children>

Gov.UK was suggested by several colleagues echoed how to talk to children

<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/>

Children's Commissioner response

<https://schoolsweek.co.uk/we-should-not-hide-from-children-what-is-happening-in-ukraine/>

BBC News - Advice if you're upset by the news

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/13865002>

CBeebies mentioned by a few people though I cannot find anything specific to Ukraine they cover wellbeing.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/talking-to-your-child-about-emotions-love-monster>

Scouts and ways to provide balance between focusing on Ukraine and wellbeing. They share a range of good activities which bring peace, calm and joy.

<https://www.scouts.org.uk/news/2022/february/responding-to-the-crisis-in-ukraine/>

Responding to concerns surrounding Ukraine

<https://swgfl.org.uk/magazine/schools-responding-to-concerns-surrounding-ukraine/>

[How to talk to your child about the situation in Ukraine](#)

Slides from **Dr Anne Lane**, a clinical psychologist, shared with parents by some Wiltshire schools to help talk about the situation in Ukraine

The DfE have updated their Education Hub with a reminder to ensure our sources of information are reliable and not misinformed and provides advice on how to talk about the situation constructively with pupils.

- [Five ways to talk to children about conflict](#)

Save the Children have updated their website to include advice for professionals and families

- [Worrying about Russia and Ukraine](#)

Childline have updated their resources on anxiety

- [How to talk to your teenager about the invasion of Ukraine](#)