

## CALMING CHILDREN DURING A GLOBAL CRISIS

Unless you have been residing under a rock or on an island with zero contact with the rest of the planet, it is safe to say that you and your family have been inundated with disturbing news around the world. On social media, in classrooms and the playground, children are hearing about traumatizing circumstances around the globe. How do we answer their inquisitive questions? How much information should we share? Do we say anything at all?

**“Speak to what's actionable to help put your child's mind at ease,”** says Dr. Beth Oller, a family physician in Stockton, KS. Oller further clarifies, “With younger kids, speak simply and avoid discussing scary topics in detail. With adolescents, honesty is the best policy. Always be transparent.”

"Children should be **encouraged to ask questions** but to continue with their daily routines of schoolwork, play and bedtime," says Dr. Jessica Griffin, a child psychologist and executive director of the Child Trauma Training Center at the UMass Chan Medical School in Worcester, MA. Griffin explains that, "**routines can send signals to the brain that children are safe. Routines are calming for children in anxiety-provoking situations.**"

**Set a good example** for your children by managing your stress through **healthy lifestyle choices**, such as eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, avoiding drugs/alcohol, and not over consuming social media/news. When you are prepared, rested, and relaxed you can **respond better to disturbing events and can make decisions in the best interest of your family.**

“For children under the age of 7, it might just be acknowledging that something is happening in other parts of the world and asking something like, ‘Have you heard anything?’ Take the child's lead," said Janine Domingues, a clinical psychologist at the nonprofit Child Mind Institute in New York. “Overall, just **provide reassurance**, that this is what we know right now. Let them know you don't know all the answers but here are some places we can go,” Domingues said.

Children, young and old, have common worries when it comes to war, crisis and trauma even if they do not verbalize it: Am I safe? Are the people taking care of me safe? How will this affect my day-to-day life? Dr. Gene Beresin, executive director for The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston tells us that “children know things are troubled. They know things are problematic. They may ask you if you're worried. And frankly, you got to be honest. You can say, 'Yes, I am, but **we can manage this. We can get through this.**' I would indulge them a little bit.”

The recurring message, regardless of a child's age, is to be honest, unplug from screens altogether for a while and give the young people in your life extra tender loving care. We all need the reassurance that we are brave and will look after each other no matter what.



Sources: [The Associated Press](#)

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/04/reassure-children-about-russia-ukraine-war-with-resilience-tales-say-experts>

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