

Talking to your child about War and Conflict

BE HONEST



Answer questions factually and consider how much information is appropriate to your child's age and development. Children can feel and sense emotions the same way we do and if you're not honest with your child it can make them even more frightened. If you don't know the answer to their questions tell them so and acknowledge how hard it is to not feel certain or in control of what happens.

BE CALM



Your child will take their lead from you and be reassured if you are steady and matter of fact. Try not to dismiss or talk children out of their feelings or anxieties – accept and acknowledge them and empathise with how hard it must be to feel those things.

BE BRAVE



Start a conversation with them. Some children may not ask questions or appear upset, but this doesn't necessarily mean they don't have fears or anxieties. Choose a time when you are together and busy with something to ask what they have heard about the war and if they have any questions or worries.

BE BALANCED



Use familiar language and be careful not to overload children with too much information. Use child friendly sources such as Newsround. Try and limit how much they see on TV or social media. If it is appropriate for their age, empower them with the things they can do e.g., filling a shoe box with essential toiletries or toys for those who are displaced. Look for the helpers, keep them hopeful by balancing some of the news statistics with stories of compassion, kindness, and courage.



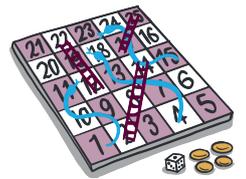
The importance of play when children are anxious or fearful



THE POWER OF PLAY

Children have experienced the disruption and fear created by the pandemic and are now seeing images of war and confusion in Ukraine. Playing, particularly shared play, is linked to wellbeing and reducing stress in adults and children. Shared play releases hormones and chemicals in the brain and body that support strong positive relationships and leave us feeling less anxious and aggressive. At a time when fear and anxiety are high, play provides an opportunity for family connection.

TYPES OF PLAY



PHYSICAL

Jumping, climbing, dancing, and skipping are really important for using up energy that may come from stress.

IMAGINATIVE PLAY

Role play such as tea parties, superheroes or shopkeepers can help children to make sense of experiences and to escape from a frightening reality.

FINE MOTOR SKILLS

Drawing, creating, baking, building, cutting and sticking. Becoming absorbed in activity can help children move away from their worries and provide respite and welcome relief from their preoccupation and fear.

ROUGH AND TUMBLE

Chasing, grappling and wrestling safely together can be a vital part of reducing

RULE-BASED

Hide and seek, treasure hunts, board games, card games and I-spy. Games such as this require children to actively engage, and this gives them energy and lust for life and keeps them hopeful.

PLAY AS TIME TO CONNECT

Playing together can also provide opportunities for important conversations that allow children to make sense of their experiences and voice fears and worries with an adult they trust.