



## Know! To Talk About the Invasion of Ukraine

According to memes and videos on popular social media sites, World War III is about to begin. It is a sentiment being echoed by middle and high school students worldwide, accompanied by terrifying images of missiles exploding, families fleeing their homes, young children hiding out underground, and human casualties. No wonder our young people are more anxious than ever. What is occurring in Ukraine is alarming for adults and youth alike, and with social media, a war that is happening thousands of miles away feels much closer to home. It is especially worrisome for the families of military members, and for those who have family or cultural ties to Ukraine or Russia. Most young people have an idea of what's going on, whether we realize it or not, and they need us to not only debunk the misinformation that's out there, but to provide a listening ear and much-needed reassurance.

For younger children, developmental experts tell us we should limit their screentime and exposure to television coverage of the events taking place in Ukraine. However, for our tweens and teens, it is near to impossible to shelter them from what's happening. We can limit their exposure at home as well, but when they get to school, or when they're with friends after school, they will likely be subjected to the videos and posts that contain disturbing images and information.

### Here's what we can do:

**Acknowledge and Ask Questions:** We would be doing our children a disservice to avoid the topic with them. Instead, when you have a captive audience in the car, or when you have a moment together at home, bring up the subject. Ask them what they know about what's happening in Ukraine; what they've heard and what they've seen.

**Listen Carefully:** They may make references to seeing videos on TikTok and/or Instagram, or other social media outlets. Some of what they're hearing may be true, and a great deal of it may not. But at this point just listen and try to gauge how they are feeling.

**Provide Facts and Context:** Be sure to keep your tone calm and your facts selective. You do not need to share every horrific detail. Be truthful but reassuring, keeping in mind that most young people want to know (1) if you (their parent/caregiver) are worried; (2) if they should be worried; (3) if they are safe; (4) if you are safe; and (5) how this will affect your daily lives?

**Focus on the Helpers:** If there is a silver lining to tragedy, it can be found in the helpers. Encourage your children to look for them. In this current situation, you can start by pointing out that there are people and governments around the world that are working together to stop the violence and end the conflict between the two countries, as well as providing humanitarian aid.

**Take Action:** In other words, BE one of the helpers. Together with your child, research and seek out ways to help those in need in Ukraine. It could be making a financial donation to a credible organization, or it may be seeking out and attending a peaceful rally.

When you get the conversation started with your child it is important to let them know that what is happening in Ukraine is fluid and complex, and that you might not have all the answers, and that's okay. The most important thing is to get them talking, thinking, and communicating. It will help them not only process and work through their emotions and feelings with the current crisis but will help set the foundation in talking through and getting through difficult events and occurrences that come about in the future.

#### Sources:

[Anya Kamenetz, Cory Turner, NPR: What to say to kids when the news is scary. Feb. 24, 2022.](#)

[Leanne Italie, AP, CBS News: Honesty, reassurance: How to talk to kids about Ukraine. Feb. 25, 2022.](#)

[San Diego County Office of Education: Resources for Educators, Families to Discuss the Events in Ukraine with Students – A Toolkit for Engaging Students During A Crisis. Feb. 24, 2022.](#)

[Sarah Schwartz, Kevin Bushweller, EducationWeek: How to Talk With Students About the Russia-Ukraine War: 5 Tips. Feb. 24, 2022.](#)

## Tips For Mentors and Adult Allies

The classroom is a powerful place to engage students during a crisis. For teaching resources for educators that include 'links to learn from,' and additional information for military families, visit:

[Resources for Educators, Families to Discuss the Events in Ukraine with Students – A Toolkit for Engaging Students During A Crisis.](#)

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