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# Know! to Talk About Violence in Israel and Palestine

## Open with a Question

A good way to start a conversation is with an open-ended question to gauge what your young person knows and feels about the conflict. You might ask, "What do you know about what's happening around the world?" or "What are you feeling about the conflict going on in the world right now?" and let them lead the conversation from there. Don't force them if they aren't ready to talk about it. However, don't assume that they haven't heard anything. Kids discover the news in various ways, including social media, friends, school, or TV. It's likely that they have heard something about the conflict and may look to you for answers to the questions they have.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

In the past week, news coverage and social media have been dominated by the ongoing conflict in Israel and Palestine. This conflict is alarming for adults and youth alike, and social media can make everything going on feel very close to home, especially for those with family or cultural ties to Israel or Palestine. The recent violence in the Middle East may also exacerbate pre-existing anxiety, sadness, or fear brought on by violence, especially as conflicts like the ongoing war in Ukraine remain at the forefront of our news and social media.

It's important to remember that most young people have some idea about what is going on, and they deserve caring adults who will listen to their concerns, debunk misinformation, and provide reassurance.

Consider the following tips for talking to the young people in your life about violence and conflict:

### Check In with Yourself First

Thinking and talking about world conflicts tends to bring up strong, complex emotions. Before you start a conversation with a young person about the violence occurring in Israel and Palestine, take some time to check in with how you are feeling. That way, you can avoid leading the conversation with strong emotions or political views and instead be available to your youth for their questions and concerns. Young people of all ages will likely have many questions for you, so if you can, brush up on the basics of the conflict by checking reputable news sources. You'll be able to help answer basic questions when they come up but know that it's okay to tell young people the truth if you don't know the answer to their questions -- you can always look up more information and get back to them later.<sup>1</sup>

### Keep it Age-Appropriate

Keep in mind what the young person in your life will be able to handle when discussing conflict. You can use age ratings in terms of TV and movies to help guide what material to share with young people. For younger children, use clear, short sentences and concepts they can understand. You may want to reassure them they are safe from danger and remind them that people are working hard to stop the conflict and violence. Older children and adolescents can handle more detail and specific information.

They probably have heard a lot of information already, so use your conversation as an opportunity to talk about misinformation, disinformation, and media literacy. Encourage them to think critically about the news they see and hear. For children of all ages, remember that they deserve to know what's happening in the world. Do your best to balance providing information with comfort and reassurance.<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

## Listen Carefully

Pay close attention to your young person's thoughts, feelings, and reactions. Acknowledge the importance of their concerns and perspectives. Especially in young children, emotions may show up physiologically through stomach aches, headaches, and not feeling well in general. Ask them about their emotions and provide additional support and attention if you notice this. Young people who are particularly distressed, overwhelmed, or preoccupied by violence and conflict may benefit from help from a mental health professional.<sup>3,5</sup>

## Monitor Media Consumption

Consider limiting access to media coverage of conflict for younger children. Switch to a different channel when they are around to avoid exposing them to graphic content. Upsetting footage and images played on the news and social media can traumatize elementary-age children and younger. Older children and teens have more access to social media and may have already seen upsetting content. Encourage them to limit how much time they spend consuming content about conflict and to take breaks from social media as much as they need. If your youth saw something on social media that upset them, talk about it, remind them they are safe, and encourage them to come to you to process their feelings. If you need to report inappropriate content, try to do this with your youth to help them feel in control of what has happened.<sup>3,4,6</sup>

## Continue to Care and Check In

As the conflict continues, keep checking in with youth to see how they are feeling. They will likely have new questions and feelings as time passes. Difficult conversations are never one-and-done, so don't be afraid to come back to the topic after a little while to check in.<sup>1,2</sup>

## Resources

[How to talk to kids about the violence in Israel and Gaza : Life Kit : NPR](#)

[How to talk to your children about conflict and war | UNICEF Parenting](#)  
[Terrorism and War: How to Talk to Children \(aacap.org\)](#)

[How do I talk to my kids about the conflict in Israel? Expert tips \(kxan.com\)](#)

[Israel attack: How to help young people cope with graphic images on social media - National | Globalnews.ca](#)

[What to do if your child has seen something inappropriate online. \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](#)

[Talking to Your Kids About War \(verywellfamily.com\)](#)

Superscript sources are hyperlinked at the start of this document

For additional Know! Prevention Tips for Everyone, scan the QR code:



## Encourage Compassion, not Stigma

Conflict can bring up prejudice, discrimination, and stereotypes. When you talk with young people, avoid labeling groups of people as "bad" or "evil," which could lead to developing prejudice. Instead, encourage youth to be compassionate towards those experiencing violence and conflict. Remind them that everyone should do their part at school and home to be kind to each other.<sup>2,3,7</sup>

## Focus on the Helpers

Find and share positive stories of people helping each other with acts of bravery and kindness. Encourage your youth to notice the helpers and take positive action themselves, whether that's donating spare change to a credible organization, creating a poster or poem for peace, or writing a letter to the President or grieving families.<sup>2,3</sup>

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