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## Early Childhood Training & Consultation Program

### Explaining Events in the Ukraine to Children

The current war between Ukraine and Russia may be frightening and confusing to children. Talking to your children about the war can help them process it and open lines of communication. It is also a great way to combat misinformation they may have that may be frightening (i.e. that the US is at war or our country may be bombed). It is best to provide factual information in a developmentally appropriate way. Reassure your child that they are safe and that you will continue to keep them safe.

Welcoming their emotions, providing accurate information, and showing kids how they can help are ways to help them process what is happening. Children are often more aware of current events than we may realize. Be vigilant about how much children are exposed to via television, internet, or our own conversations. Here are some tips to navigate these events:

### Normalize Fear & Emotions

- Don't minimize their concerns by saying "the crisis is far away" or "don't worry". This sends the message that their legitimate concerns are not important and shuts down the lines of communication.
- Acknowledge that it is okay to be afraid or worried about what is happening. Explain that many people are feeling this way due to what is happening.
- Share your feelings. Acknowledge that you may be afraid/worried as well. Talk about the positive ways you cope with stress or worry. Help your child identify coping strategies and practice with them.
- Tailor the information you provide the child about what is happening to the child's age and developmental stage.
- Remind children that there are many adults who are working to resolve the situation and to help those in need.

## Share your feelings in a constructive way

- Don't use words like "horrified" or "terrified" when talking about the war. This can add to the child's anxiety.
- Keep it simple. "I'm worried too" "When I am worried I find it helpful to..."
- Share age appropriate information. If child is older, perhaps show a map of where the conflict is taking place and provide some context as to why it is happening.
- Anxiety is caused by lack of control. Combat this by providing information.

## Take Action

- Initiate the conversation about events. Be the first to discuss this with your child. Don't wait for them to come to you with their questions and possible misinformation.
- Limit and control information. Stick to the facts. Leave out upsetting and gory details.
- Be a helper. Help your child donate to a humanitarian cause. Explain how your donation will help.
- Promote peace in your daily interactions and speech.

## References & Resources:

- [www.youngminds.org](http://www.youngminds.org)
- [www.verywellmind.com](http://www.verywellmind.com)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irY\\_grC8VpQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irY_grC8VpQ)