



Supporting Young People During Distressing World Events

Many of our families have personal connections to the events currently unfolding in the Middle East. For some young people this is not just news – it may involve grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, family homes and so much more.

Young people will be able to sense fear in the adults around them which could result in them being anxious themselves.

They may demonstrate this behaviour by:

- Experiencing sleep difficulties or nightmares
 - Suffer from physical symptoms (stomach aches or headaches)
 - Become irritable or have emotional outbursts
 - Asking questions
 - And some young people will not mention it at all — but may still feel unsettled.
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How Parents Can Help

1. Keep Explanations Simple and Honest

Young people need brief, clear information without graphic detail. Let them know the facts. Always allow them to ask lots of questions.

2. Reassure them and let them know they are safe

Young people even teenagers need to be assured they are safe.

- Reassure them ‘You can keep them safe,’ provide information on the support you have in place for them as well as for yourself (Young people will worry about who will look after the parents as well)
- Be clear, confident and open about the worrying news
- Continue familiar family rituals

You can say:

“Right now, we are safe here.”

3. Limit News Exposure but do not blackout

Young people should not be exposed to continuous news coverage or distressing images. Find a balance between a blackout and over exposure.

- Turn off background news
- Be mindful of the information they are accessing on social media; encourage them to discuss the news after they have seen/read it.
- Avoid discussing distressing details within earshot

Young people often imagine situations as worse than they are, they can fear the uncertainty and pick up on your fears as well.

4. Help Them Express Feelings

Young people may need help naming emotions.

Try:

- “You look worried. Is something on your mind?”
- Drawing pictures or watching the news together
- Encouraging questions and discussions

All feelings are allowed — fear, sadness, anger, confusion.

5. Regulate Yourself First

Young people co-regulate with adults. If you are feeling overwhelmed, take a pause before talking.

It is okay to say:

“I feel worried too. When I feel like that, I take a few slow breaths.”

Supporting Yourself So You Can Support Your Child

When world events feel personal, frightening or uncertain, it is completely understandable for you to also feel

- Anxious or on edge
- Distracted or preoccupied
- Tearful or low
- Angry or frustrated

- Guilty for being safe
- Powerless

Therefore it is important to:

1. Lower the Bar

This is not a time for perfect parenting.

Focus on:

- Basic routines
- Warmth and connection
- Enough sleep and regular meals

Some days, “good enough” is genuinely enough.

2. Contain Your News Intake

Constant exposure heightens the nervous system.

- Choose specific times to check updates
- Avoid scrolling late at night
- Turn off push notifications
- Be mindful of graphic content

Ask yourself: *Is this information helping me right now?*

3. Separate Adult Processing from Conversations with Young People

It is healthy for young people to see that adults have feelings.

But young people should not become emotional containers for adult fear.

Try to:

- Process intense emotions with other adults
- Speak to friends, family or community members
- Seek professional support if needed, SCP are here in school if you need them

You might say to your child:

“I’m feeling sad today, but I am okay and I can handle it.”

4. Use Simple Grounding Techniques

When anxiety spikes, bring yourself back to the present moment.

- Take 5 slow breaths, longer on the exhale
- Name 5 things you can see, 4 you can feel, 3 you can hear
- Put your feet firmly on the floor and notice the support beneath you

Even 60 seconds of regulation can shift your nervous system.

5. Protect Sleep

Worry intensifies at night.

- Create a wind-down routine
- Avoid news before bed
- Write down worries to “park” them for the morning

Rest is not avoidance — it is restoration.

6. Watch for Signs You Need Extra Support

Consider reaching out if you notice:

- Persistent panic or dread
- Difficulty functioning day-to-day
- Ongoing sleep disruption
- Feeling emotionally numb or detached

Seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

7. Stay Connected to Community

Isolation amplifies fear.

- Connect with trusted friends
- Attend community or faith gatherings if supportive
- Engage in small acts of solidarity or kindness

Connection reminds the nervous system that we are not alone.

If you are overwhelmed, supporting yourself is not selfish — it is an act of care for your whole family.

If you would like some extra support for you or your child please contact:

Kavisha Dharia (Therapeutic Lead) - Call or text 07785798759 or send an email to kavisha@schoolscounsellingpartnership.co.uk

Kavisha is in school Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 8:30 to 4:00.