

Helpful Tips Regarding Conversations About War and Conflict

Dear Families:

The ongoing situation in the Middle East is causing a great deal of distress, anxiety, and fear for numerous individuals, families, friends, and students.

It is so important to express understanding and support to our families, friends, and children. Conversations about tragic world events can be challenging, especially with our children. It is essential to create a safe space for them to express their feelings, ask questions, and seek guidance. Reassure them that you are here to support and comfort them, addressing their concerns with honesty and age-appropriate information.

Starting the Conversation:

There is no “right age” to talk about this with your kids.

If you think your kids may hear about this at school from peers, online, or from the news on TV - I would bring it up to them ahead of time or be ready to have the discussion if they do hear it elsewhere.

It's important to tell the truth using real words (invasion, rockets, death) builds trust.

Two things are true: we don't want to flood kids with fear and when kids ask questions, they are ready for truthful answers.

Talk slowly, make eye contact; this maintains connection and helps a child feel safer.

Clear, direct, honest information shared while connected to a loving, trusted adult is what helps children feel safe and understand the world around them.

Script for Starting the Conversation

“I want to tell you about something that is serious and sad and will likely bring up a lot of feelings. Whatever you feel and whatever questions you have, I’m here with you.

There is a war between Israel and a terrorist organization named Hamas.

War is when two groups of people are no longer using words to manage conflict and instead resort to harmful, aggressive actions with weapons.

This is really big news, and a lot of people are talking about it. You might hear friends at school or other people talk about things that feel scary or confusing. If that happens, know that I am here to talk to you about anything and everything.”

5 Things to Keep in Mind

1. Take Care of Yourself

Self-care is not a “nice to have” it is a necessity, especially in moments that are emotionally taxing. Taking care of yourself is the first step to showing up as the sturdy leader for your child.

Script:

“I just wanted to tell you that I had a hard day. I'm safe and you're safe. I just need a few minutes in my room, alone. You did nothing wrong. This is one of those times that Mommy needs some space to take care of her feelings. I love you, see you in a bit.”

2. Make Space for Feelings

These conversations have the potential to bring up big feelings for kids. Make space for your child to react, however that may be.

Script:

“What's this like to talk about?” It's OK if your child remains silent. You can share, “I know, it's heavy stuff.”

3. You Won't Have all of the Answers

We must tolerate our discomfort around the uncertainty.

Script:

“You have a lot of very good, important questions. I have questions too. I don't have all the answers though. I wish I did. And when I know more, I'll share with you, I promise.”

4. The Power of Presence

While our words may never feel like enough, our presence will always matter. Know that your presence is an action: a long embrace or cuddle, singing a familiar song, or reading a favorite childhood book. Our kids will remember how they feel with us more than any specific words we say.

Script:

“We have each other to hold when we feel scared. You're not alone. We are not alone. We can be scared AND we can be brave.”

5. Encourage an Ongoing Dialogue

We want to ensure our kids feel comfortable coming back to us as questions or feelings arise.

Script:

“We can keep talking about this. In fact, it's important we do because you may have questions or feelings come up. I'm here for all of them. You can ask me anything.”

Additional Resources

Resources:

- Judy Pace – [Teaching Controversial Issues: A Framework for Reflective Practice](#)
- Constitutional Rights Foundation – [Conducting a Civil Conversation in the Classroom](#)
- [How to Talk to Kids About Violence, Crime, and War](#): Common Sense Media gathers tips and conversation starters to help you talk to kids of different ages about the toughest topics.
- [Talking to Your Kids About War](#): VeryWell Family explores ways families can speak with young people about war, including tips on sharing information and restricting media coverage.
- [How to Talk to Your Children About Conflict and War](#): UNICEF's guide offers eight tips to support and comfort your children.
- [Handle with Care: Supporting Young People During Crises](#): Learning for Justice offers recommendations and resources to help guide conversations with young people and to manage potential subsequent actions and reactions.
- [National Association of School Psychologists: Talking to Children About Violence: Tips for Parents and Teachers](#) Tips for families and educators about talking to our children and students about violence.

If your child is showing signs of anxiety, please feel free to reach out to me @ cmaccrory@dciu.org

Sincerely,



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