

# SUPPORTING SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AT THIS TIME

## tips and tools for teachers and parents

### CALM AND CONSISTENT

Mirror calm and stability – Young people will take their lead from you. We can help young people who might feel unsettled by making school & home feel as 'normal' and safe as possible.

Routine, structure and consistency help them to feel safe and secure. Change as few things as possible as little as possible.

### RESPONDING

Age-appropriate communication is crucial. Teenagers have an understanding of more complex concepts and of experiences outside of themselves.

Open questions can provide the context for wider discussions about thoughts and feelings. Reassure them that their feelings are valid, they may feel overwhelming and scary and it is important to talk about them.

Be aware that stress can be expressed differently by young people, if you're not sure how a young person is feeling, ask them.

Acknowledge feelings, be responsive and notice what's going on – Has anything changed in their behaviour? Are they more needy, more easily upset, reactive or hypervigilant? Notice if children want to talk or share and think about how to help them feel calm and safe.

You don't have to have all the answers- it's ok to say 'I don't know' or 'I will come back to you'.

It's okay to say –

"We are all feeling sad about what has happened"

"We can support each other – we can listen to each other – we can share with each other – we can help each other"

Be mindful of responding to what we see and hear rather than being pre-emptive.

### CONNECTING

Our most powerful tool for wellbeing is connection. Children will respond in different ways and at different times. They may want to chat, ask questions and express themselves in different ways. Talking helps us understand what's going on and make sense of it.

Remind them about how we all look out for each other. We can notice if our friend is sad or not feeling positive or just isn't themselves.

Remember that all the young people will have different points of reference and some will have been more exposed to information than others.

Young people will respond in different ways and at different times. Create opportunities for open-ended communication. They may want to chat, ask questions and express themselves in different ways. Allow them to lead the time, space and content of the conversation.

Talking helps us understand what's going on and make sense of it. Remind them that they can talk to you.

### FINDING THE BALANCE

Whilst we want to be responsive to student's feelings, it is also important to model positive and helpful ways we can think about the situation:

Talk about hope, peace, and the situation coming to an end.

Try to create an environment whereby we acknowledge difficulties feelings whilst remaining hopeful and building positivity. We can still have joy in our homes and classrooms.

**we come together - we connect - we talk - we share - we look out for each other**

# SUPPORTING SECONDARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AT THIS TIME

## tips and tools for teachers and parents continued

### ACTIONS

As the American Children's TV host, Mr Rogers famously said, 'Look for the helpers'. Focus attention on all the people who are helping, caring, doing their best to make a difference.

Helping others can also help us with some of the uncomfortable emotions. Doing something can be empowering and gives children some sense of agency. Encourage them to act, raise money, help support organisations organising supplies for soldiers, send cards to families in Israel

### COMMUNICATION

Clearly communicate and respond to young people's questions as honestly as possible, including being open about uncertainty. Follow their lead to know how much detail to share, and provide opportunities young people to talk about their thoughts and feelings, rather than suppressing them, and help normalize these feelings. Answer their questions simply and clearly, but don't add information that they didn't ask for. Be honest with them so they know they can trust you. You don't need to have all the answers. It is ok to say that you don't know and that you also don't understand some of what is happening.

Share our own feelings with our children as well, while still maintaining control of the situation. "I am also worried, but I am glad that I am safe here with you, and that we are protected by the police and CST."

Listen to children, and allow them to share their thoughts, feelings and questions. Show understanding to children: "I hear that you are scared."

"What do you understand on the matter?" We can understand their feelings from the words they choose to use.

Our voices should express feelings of hope and sturdiness. We can tell our children:

"We are safe here. The UK support Israel and the Jewish people. We trust our family to get through this together."

### SUPPORTING YOURSELF

We all respond to situations differently and, like the children, will have different experiences depending on our own circumstances. Sometimes our reactions can take us by surprise or our anxieties can be triggered unexpectedly.

Support yourself - Try and prepare for burnout. The backlash of holding all of this can be exhausting. What do you need to do to be OK?

Breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, physical activity can all help us feel more grounded and present.

Give yourself the time and space to manage your own worries.

Do you need to talk to someone about how you feel? Identify someone you feel comfortable to talk to.

### EXPOSURE

Be mindful of their exposure to the press as well as your own. Block social media sites with video content. At times, turn off the television, put the newspapers away and encourage young people to stay off social media. Loosely structure time to talk about the situation and ask them if they have any questions. If they want to watch the news, do it together with them to help them process what they have seen.

Turn off notifications / pop ups on phones. Ask them where they are getting their news from? Does this come with political bias? Encourage them to unfollow certain groups or news reels so it is not constantly on their feed.

Discuss that they are exposed to things that no one should be seeing. Talk about it. If there is something that has been triggering then look at it together. Spend time with them scrolling on their feeds so you get an idea of what they are seeing

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