

INTERMEDIATE GRADES



Tips for Intermediate Teachers when Discussing Traumatic World Events

When discussing traumatic world events with students, it is important to remember that children will have a wide range of responses to and understanding of the situation. Some may not appear to be affected at all, while others may be highly impacted.



KEY POINTS

- Provide simple age-appropriate facts
- Acknowledge all feelings
- Provide hope



MODEL CALM

- It is important that the adults model a sense of calm and security
- Students will take their cues from us. If we are calm and hopeful, it will be easier for them to be too
- Class discussions should be brief: students trust adults to tell them the truth and to provide developmentally appropriate information



START BY LISTENING

- Listen to their conversations. Watch for signs of fear that students may not be able to put into words (e.g. changes in normal behaviour or functioning)
- We can't assume we know what they are thinking and feeling, and what they are thinking and feeling might surprise us
- Older children can be reluctant to talk with their parents or other caring adults, so this is a time when we need to be checking in with them



PROVIDE FACTUAL INFORMATION

- Give students brief answers with basic facts that are developmentally appropriate
- Ask students what they already know so you can correct any misinformation
- Keep the information simple. Dwelling on the situation or details can increase fear and anxiety
- You don't have to have all the answers. A simple reply with *"I'm not sure about that"* can give you time to reflect or do some research



VALIDATE AND NORMALIZE

- Let students know you heard their concerns. (E.g. *"Sounds like you are feeling worried."* *"I hear you when you say you are scared."*)
- Address their fear: remind students that they are safe right now and let them know that the adults in their lives will continue to do their job of keeping them safe
- Let students know that what they are feeling is OK and normal under the circumstances. (E.g. *"It makes sense that you would be worried right now. Lots of people would react that way in this situation."* *"You are having a normal reaction to a very abnormal event."*)

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DO NOT SHOW MEDIA COVERAGE

- Intermediate students don't have the context adults have, and they don't have the ability to psychologically screen what they are seeing
- Students are less able to decide for themselves when to stop listening and take a break when they hear distressing news
- Teach critical analysis of media coverage and ensure you have carefully reviewed any media materials you are using as teaching tools
- Encourage students to limit the amount of time they spend on social media. Using social media may increase fear and misinformation
- Encourage students to limit the amount of information they take in even from reputable media sources
- Encourage students to limit the amount of time they spend discussing the situation with peers, which can create unnecessary stress



ENCOURAGE EMPATHY AND COMPASSION

- Remind students there may be others who are impacted by this situation
- Encourage children to be kind and gentle with others and to empathize with people who have other backgrounds and experiences



MAINTAIN NORMAL ROUTINE

- Structure and normalcy during stressful times and unusual circumstances is very important for students
- Acknowledge the situation and then get on with the normal activities of the day



ADDRESS FEARS, BUT ALSO FOCUS ON HOPE ²

- While some traumatic world events demonstrate the worst of humankind, this is also a time when we see the very best in people and countries, who step forward to help.
- Individuals around the world often launch their own efforts, including a multitude of crowd funding sites

² Adapted from *Talking with Youth about Ukraine - Crisis Management Institute (cmionline.com)*



ACCESS SUPPORTS WHEN NEEDED

If you have any students who are in a high state of distress and have trouble functioning in their regular activities at school, please consider accessing the following supports:

- School counsellor
- ELL teacher, International Education department, SWIS worker
- Community counselling supports
- <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>
- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- <https://cmha.ca/>

