

SECONDARY GRADES



Tips for Secondary Teachers when Discussing Traumatic World Events

When discussing traumatic world events with students, it is important to remember 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.

For older youth, the challenges are compounded by other factors. Social media allows students to broadcast their thoughts to one another without any adults being a part of the conversation. Although they are older and have perhaps learned about wars in school, it is altogether different when something happens that is current and is dominating the news.¹

When these conversations occur outside of adult view, it is easy for youth to become hopeless and depressed. Often, they're reluctant to talk with their parents or other caring adults, so this is a time when we need to be checking in with them. It is important to engage in conversations about both the troubling world events and the effects of social media, and to take breaks.

Conversation Considerations



MODEL CALM

- It is important that adults model a sense of calm and security. We can acknowledge that we are affected by the situation too



BE AWARE OF CLASS CONTEXT

- We can't always know where students are coming from or what they are bringing into the classroom emotionally
- 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



LISTEN TO WHAT THE STUDENTS ARE SAYING

- We can't assume that all students share the same knowledge or views
- What youth are actually thinking and feeling may surprise us



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: 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."*)

¹ Adapted from *Talking with Youth about Ukraine - Crisis Management Institute (cmionline.com)*

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LIMIT MEDIA COVERAGE

- Youth don't have the context adults have and they don't have the ability to psychologically screen what they are seeing
- Teach critical analysis of media coverage and ensure you have carefully reviewed any media materials you are using as teaching tools
- Provide factual information and correct any misinformation
- 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



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



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 liaison, international education department, SWIS worker
- Community counselling supports
- [Foundry Virtual BC](#)
- <https://keltymentalhealth.ca/>
- <https://www.anxietycanada.com/>
- <https://cmha.ca/>

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