

# TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT WAR

Children need to be physically and emotionally near family and friends, especially when feeling distressed and anxious. They need physical affection and comfort - a hug if young, and in individual ways when older. They also need a listening ear. If living away from close ones or if your child knows someone who is living in a conflict setting, talk about ways to keep in touch and how they can support their friend or family member from a distance. Empowering children to support someone else can help channel their fears and worries.

## BE CALM

Be as calm as possible in what you say and how you act to create a secure environment. Be careful not to let your own worries distress them. If you are concerned, discuss the conflict with family and friends but out of the reach of children.

## GIVE SIMPLE ANSWERS

Children need simple, concrete answers. If they ask, be honest and truthful, but do not overwhelm them or expose them to scary information. Take time to explain the situation in a way that is suitable to their age and developmental level. It is okay to say 'I don't know' too.

## LIMIT EXPOSURE TO MEDIA

Even from a very young age, children are exposed to sometimes brutal coverage of conflicts on media. Protect them from too much and try to avoid it if it is distressing. Generally, it is a good idea to limit the time spent watching news etc. to twice a day and ensure children (and adults) don't use their devices just before bedtime.

## DO THINGS YOU LIKE

Allocate specific times with children to do things with them that they like, such as games and other stimulating activities. Develop a list of things with them that they could do in their quiet times such as reading, drawing or listening to music.