

Tips for Supporting Children During Times of War: A Guide for Teachers

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About Helping Children

Once again, teachers are faced with the challenge of explaining war to children. Regardless of personal circumstances, all children are likely to be affected in some way during this difficult time. The guidance you provide, as a teacher, can make the difference between whether a child is completely overwhelmed or is able to develop emotional and psychological coping skills.

Suggestions

For most children, teachers can provide adequate support with the following suggestions:

Be a Role Model

- Set an example of calm and incontrol behavior. The more in control adults appear to be, the more confident children will be that things will ultimately turn out all right.
- Keep in mind that children learn from watching the adults in their lives, and that includes teachers. They will take their lead from watching your behavior and mood.
- Monitor the tone and content of your conversations with other adults when children are present.
- Take time for yourself too, and try to deal with your own reactions to the situation as fully as possible.

Connect with Children

- Pay attention to children's fears. Children can feel embarrassed or criticized when their fears are trivialized.
- Respect a child's wish not to talk until ready.
- Help children to put the events of war in perspective. Explain that war is intended to prevent bad things from happening in the future.
- Look for ways to inject humor into classroom discussions and activities.

If any of your students seems to need help beyond what is normally available at your school, alert the child's parents or caregivers about your concerns. By creating an environment of open communication in which children feel free to come to you for help, you can help them cope and reduce the risk of lasting emotional difficulties.