

1. Let's start talking!

It is very important that children learn about what is happening from us first - in a safe relationship and environment. The news of war always arouses fear and triggers an avalanche of fears. If it's us who give this message to the child, we have a chance to take care of his emotions. Let us not delude ourselves that we can protect children from difficult knowledge. You can encounter it literally everywhere - in public transport, at school by peers, in all media, including social media. We have no influence on this. However, we can take responsibility for how we prepare the child for the news of the war - by giving it in the safest, most gentle possible way.

2. Let's dose information

War has the most cruel, brutal face. In the near future, we will probably receive drastic details of the invasion, shocking accounts and stories. Let's try not to overwhelm children with them. They should learn that there is a war going on - but as far as possible, let's make sure that they do not come into contact with the most nightmarish aspects of it.

3. Control the images

The child's imagination is driven by the resources that his mind has managed to accumulate. He may understand the word "war" not necessarily as burning houses, bloody faces, massacred bodies. And we can try to ensure that children don't see such images, so that they are not memorized in their heads. Therefore, let's try not to watch video reports in front of children, let's not show them dramatic photos. Let us try to satisfy our need to gain knowledge about what is happening in Ukraine not in their presence. Instead of images, let's give children a word. Conversation allows you to react to the child's emotions, and the word will trigger in the child's head exactly as much as he is able to receive. It is the image and vision that can show something that the child is not ready for - so let's not use them excessively. This is important.

4. Let's explain what is happening as much as possible

Knowledge always calms down, gives a sense of taming the subject. Depending on your child's age and ability to understand the situation, you can tell him how the invasion of Ukraine happened, who rules Russia, and what the West can do now. Tell

your child about NATO - it builds a sense of security. "We are in a military alliance with the largest armies in the world. In this alliance, the countries agreed not to attack any of them, because then the whole alliance would respond. It makes us safe."

5. Let's answer questions, let's not go too far ahead

Children have different degrees of acceptance of bad information and different need to satisfy knowledge. Therefore, after what is necessary, i.e., giving the child basic information about the war - let's open up to his curiosity. The child will ask as much as he is able to carry. Let us respond honestly and in accordance with our knowledge, but also with mindfulness to the child's sensitivity. We know them best and we sense how much will be "too much".

6. Let's try to soothe emotions

Most likely - despite our efforts from points 3 and 4 - children will find messages these days for which they are not emotionally ready. So, let's be ready to soothe emotions. If we see that a child is irritable, stressed, broken - let's remember that he is struggling with something that is beyond his or her power to understand the world. It's a bit as if the world from a computer game or a thriller movie suddenly entered our homes. Let's give the child a large dose of forbearance, let's overlook his behavior if he explodes with anger. Let's try to name his feelings and how difficult the situation is. We can say, "I understand what you're going through. I see you're stressed. It's very difficult what's going on."

7. Let's hug, hug, and hug

It always works

8. Let's allow ourselves to be emotional, but let's not panic in front of the child

True, we are all devastated by Putin's invasion, we cannot find a place for ourselves, we cannot think about anything else. Therefore, let's remember about the iron rule repeated before each flight - let's take care of ourselves first. Let us allow ourselves to cry and get angry, let us talk to close adults, let us seek encouragement and support in all the ways that help us. However, it is important that we are the source of support to children! When children's sense of security is slumped because war enters their world - the parent must be like a rock to lean on. Repeat calmly in conversation with your child: "I'm with you. I will make sure that we are safe. You don't have to worry about it." These words are like a soothing plaster. If it helps you to cry together, to share your sadness - do it. But as a parent, don't get hysterical about your child. If you feel that you can no longer "hold on" - go out and give yourself space for what you need. It is important not to scare the child with your own devastation.

9. Let's fight the feeling of helplessness

The belief that we can do even something symbolic is a relief. We can hang the Ukrainian flag in the window or go to a demonstration in support of Ukraine. You can talk to your child about the fact that there will probably be many refugees from this country in Poland and we will be able to help them together. If the West imposes severe sanctions on Russia and we feel their effects - we will be able to explain that this helps the attacked country and is an expression of our strength. Let us rejoice together with the children in the expressions of solidarity with Ukraine that can be seen all over the world, and let us rather leave the frustrations to ourselves. Let's give hope. Let's not give up!

Source: Gazeta Kosmos, <https://kosmosdladoroslych.pl>