

Tips for helping others at school get a handle on the worry, stress and anxiety associated with the war in Ukraine

People all over the world are currently unsettled and preoccupied by the war in Ukraine. This armed conflict, which seemed unthinkable only a short time ago, leaves many of us stunned, angry, helpless, and scared. With the following tips we hope to provide some guidance on how best to address this difficult situation at school.

People already burdened by the pandemic or other blows that life deals us are now additionally facing the ravages of this war. These effects will be felt especially by families originally hailing e.g. from Russia or Ukraine. They worry about their relatives and friends and are feeling the impact of this conflict even here in Germany.

Insecurity, helplessness, etc. are perfectly normal responses to an abnormal situation. These responses can manifest differently in different members of our school family (students, parents, faculty, and other school staff): There are those who are barely touched by these events. But others may feel crippling anxiety and a loss of their sense of security.

There seems to be no reprieve from this war, what with around-the-clock media coverage on TV, in the Internet portals, and in social networks. Images of violence in particular can have strong psychological effects.

Tips on how to address this situation

Do not hush up events or people's responses and do not hesitate to address them openly. But take care to limit these issues to specific time windows before returning to regular school routines.

Try to project as much confidence as possible. Do tell both yourself and others that there are currently no signs suggesting that the war will be spreading to Germany.

Do not hesitate to show your personal concern. You can set an example for others by showing that bewilderment, anger and fear are normal responses and that there are ways to deal with them.

Please answer questions honestly and try to put overly downplaying or dramatizing statements into perspective.

Try to maintain good peer-to-peer relations at your school and keep your channels of communication open. Communication, even across different perspectives, acts as a connecting force.

Try to make a personal effort to counteract the feelings of helplessness. Taking action (e.g. by supporting relief efforts) helps us experience that we are making a difference.

Try to reduce your media consumption of news and information on the war to the bare minimum. We have a duty to protect children from images of violence and acts of war, commensurate with their age.

Exercise, distraction, and the experience of social connectedness can be excellent antidotes to overwhelming stress.

If the signs of stress persist, it may be appropriate to seek further psychological support.

Persons to contact for support

- **School psychologists and guidance counselors at the local schools**
- **State school guidance offices in the various administrative districts**
www.km.bayern.de/ministerium/institutionen/schulberatung.html

Further support outside of school:

- **For students**
 - **Grief Helpline** ("Nummer gegen Kummer" helpline for children and adolescents), Tel.: 116 111
 - **bke-Jugendberatung Youth Counseling** (by Bundeskonferenz für Erziehungsberatung e.V., a government-run family counseling association)
<https://jugend.bke-beratung.de/views/home/index.html>
- **For adults**
 - **Local Family Counseling Centers**
 - **Grief Helpline** ("Nummer gegen Kummer" helpline for parents), Tel.: 0800 - 111 0 550
 - **bke-Jugendberatung Parent Counseling**
<https://eltern.bke-beratung.de/views/home/index.html>
 - **Crisis Intervention Hotline ("Telefonseelsorge")**
Tel.: 0800 - 111 0 111 or 0800 - 111 0 222
The Crisis Intervention Hotline is a 24/7 hotline.

Helpful links and info materials:

You can also find these instructions for schools on the homepage of the Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs

www.km.bayern.de/krieg-in-der-ukraine/hinweise-zum-umgang-in-schulen

Citizens' information ("Bürgerinformationen", Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK))

BBK information page: "Talking To Children About War" ("Mit Kindern über Krieg sprechen")

www.bbk.bund.de/DE/Das-BBK/Zivilschutz/Was-koennen-Sie-tun/Mit-Kindern-ueber-Krieg-sprechen/mit-kindern-ueber-krieg-sprechen_node.html

Click here for a list of suggestions for parents on how to support their children during the current situation.

"Bavarian Education Guide" ("Bayerischer Erziehungsratgeber" by the Bavarian State Youth Welfare Office, "Bayerisches Landesjugendamt")

Parent information "Talking to Children About Bad News" ("Mit Kindern über schlimme Nachrichten sprechen").

www.baer.bayern.de/erziehung-medien/tipps/schlimme-nachrichten/

This page also provides information about how news typically affects us and where children can turn to for more information.

Age-appropriate News

Examples include age-appropriate news such as those disseminated by logo! for the various age brackets (www.zdf.de/kinder/logo) or News-WG by BR24 (www.instagram.com/news_wg/?hl=de).

Parents' leaflet: How to Talk To Children About War?

www.harald-karutz.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Merkblatt_Karutz_Ukraine.pdf

This leaflet provides suggestion for parents on how best to talk to their children about what has happened and how to appropriately deal with the media coverage.

Information for parents and educators

www.stmas.bayern.de/aktuelle-meldungen/ukraine.php

Citizens' information ("Bürgerinformationen" by the Federal Office of Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK))

Information for affected individuals (available in different languages)

"Dealing With Stressful Events" ("Mit belastenden Ereignissen umgehen")

www.bbk.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Mediathek/Publikationen/NOAH/MitbelastendenEreignisse_numgehenallgemeineInfoA4.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4