

How to communicate effectively with children about war



My name is Les Roberts. I'm a Clinical Hypnotherapist, NLP, IEMT, EFT & Counselling Practitioner. My specialism is working with children. I have worked with children for over 20 years. I have seen first-hand, how early intervention for children who are struggling is key. Many of the children I have treated successfully have presented with anxieties, compulsive behaviours, panic attacks.



How Kids think

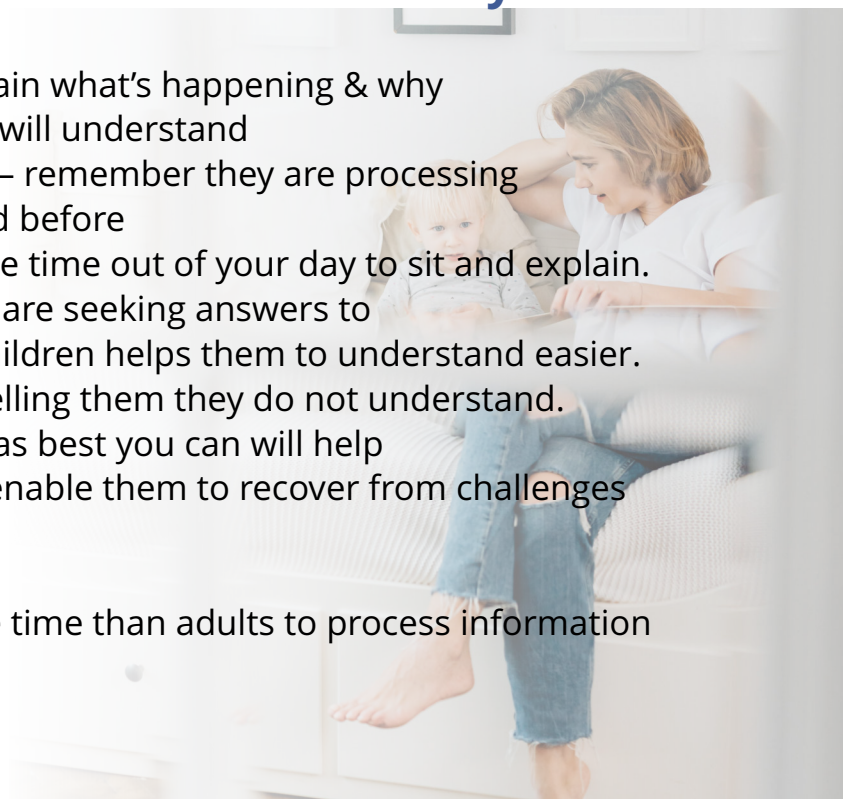
Children do not think the same as adults, therefore they are unable to process information/details the same way we do and don't often show their worries & pain through talking. They usually show using 'challenging behaviours', outbursts, sleepless nights, bed wetting and a wide range of other changes in their usual behaviours.

As a Mum & also a Grandmother (Nana), I have been in situations where my children or my grandchildren have asked questions I struggle to answer correctly. Recently, my Grandsons have been asking what's happening in Ukraine. "What's going on?", "Are we next?", "What are weapons used for?" are just a few of the questions. Our little ones have only just started to recover from Covid & the enormous impact lockdown had on them.



How you reply is important as Children have very vivid imaginations:

- 👍 Be honest as you possibly can – explain what's happening & why
- 👍 Use language & words your children will understand
- 👍 Allow your children to ask questions – remember they are processing information they haven't experienced before
- 👍 Give them our full attention – take the time out of your day to sit and explain. They may have many questions they are seeking answers to
- 👍 Having an open conversation with children helps them to understand easier. There may be part of what you are telling them they do not understand. Encouraging questions and replying as best you can will help
- 👍 Help build their resilience – this will enable them to recover from challenges and experiences
- 👍 Listen to understand
- 👍 Be patient – children may need more time than adults to process information



How to manage anxieties & worries

Emotions & moods are almost contagious! So, how can we help our children slow down the spread of these emotions?

The following suggestions will help you and your children manage your emotions & feelings:

- 👍 If feeling panicky – BREATHE! Breathe in through your nose & out through your mouth – pursing your lips as you breathe out will help relax your jaw
- 👍 Count backwards from 20 - 0, slowly with each breath
- 👍 Spell a long word – again breathing slowly until you or your children feel calmer
- 👍 Count the different shapes in the room - e.g. how many rectangles can you see?
- 👍 Practice relaxation/meditation
- 👍 Exercise, in any form, helps lift 'happy hormones' – go for a walk, run, play in the park or garden
- 👍 Limit social media time/news if these increase feelings of anxiety
- 👍 Explain lots of countries/nations are supporting Ukraine in many different ways
- 👍 Allow your children to help/contribute if they want as this can boost their confidence & is also a distraction from their thoughts





Learning through Stories

Tell your children to get nice & comfortable & close their eyes:

"Imagine you can go to a place, a wonderful place where you feel safe, secure & happy. A place where you can relax & rest a while. Here in this place, your mind becomes calmer. You start to feel really peaceful. This wonderful place could be anywhere you want it to be. It's your place, no one else's. You can put anything you want to in there. You could even make it a magical place, put your own favourite colours in there, blankets, pillows, toys, music. Anything to help you feel better & more relaxed. A place for you to rest a while that helps you to become nice & calm. Where you are totally in control of all your emotions & feelings. You can stay there as long as you want to. You can also return whenever you choose to. All you have to do is to imagine you are there! Remember this is a place where you can be calm, relaxed, feeling of being safe & secure. Make it as powerful & magical as you want!"

I hope you & your children find this useful.

For further guidance please contact me.
I'm happy to help

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