

Wellbeing. Done Well.



# Crisis in the Middle East

How to help your children (and yourself) cope with feelings about this troubling situation



The world came to a standstill on October 7 when news broke that Israel suffered an unprecedented terrorist attack, resulting in horrific violence and a declaration of war.

Many of us feel helpless when confronted with events of this scale. And others with friends and family in the affected areas are overwhelmed and don't know what to do.

Children are particularly vulnerable to fear in the wake of violence. They have a harder time understanding what's happening and putting things into perspective. We need to pay special attention to their needs during these trying times. Here are some tips.

## **Listen to What They Are Saying**

Spend time listening to understand what children already know. Sometimes it helps to have these conversations during an activity, such as drawing, mealtime, or driving with you in the car. Give them information that is truthful and appropriate for age and maturity level.

**For Younger Children.** Briefly acknowledging the war and providing reassurance may be what they need in the moment.

**For Older children.** Kids may be seeing news on social media, so help them make sense of it by finding reliable sources of information together.

## **Focus on Safety**

Help children of all ages manage worries by emphasizing that while it is important to know what is going on around the world, these frightening events are occurring far from home. Let them know you will always do your best to keep them safe. Offer reassurance that there are many people focused on ending the violence and helping people who are impacted.

## **Supervise Media Access**

Limit media viewing and repeated exposure to distressing images, especially for younger children. Monitor older children's access to media and engage them in conversations with you about what they are seeing and hearing.

## **Be calm**

Children react to both what you say and how you say it. Even if you're feeling tense, speak with them as calmly as possible. This will set the tone for ongoing conversations.

## **Maintain Family Routines**

Particularly around meals, bedtimes, and scheduled social and leisure activities. Structure helps a child feel safe. Make time for soothing activities such as reading with them or playing board games as a family.

### **Be Available**

Encourage children to come to you with questions or concerns anytime. Let them know that their fears and questions are normal and you will always make time for them.

### **Be Especially Patient**

These are distressing times. It's important to be patient with your children, your family, and other loved ones. Give them signs of reassurance such as hugs and affection. Also be patient with yourself and understanding your own needs.

### **Watch for Behavior Changes**

Children may show you through their behavior that they are struggling with what they have seen or heard. They may have physical complaints or regressive behaviors such as nightmares or sleep problems.

Seek out support from your child's doctor, school, or a counselor if you are concerned about their behaviors.

### **When to get help**

If you're feeling overwhelmed and stress is interfering with your everyday life, consulting with a counselor may be beneficial.

For a consultation with Concern, call 800-344-4222 or visit our website at [employees.concernhealth.com](https://employees.concernhealth.com)

## **Take Care of Yourself**

### **Focus on what you can control**

If following the news, monitoring updates, or scrolling through social media is causing you stress, control your media exposure. Take measures to log off when you can, and set a time once a day to check the news.

### **Make self-care a priority**

Much of what is going on is out of your control. But you can control how you take care of yourself. Get active, pay attention to your diet, get good sleep. Try having some quiet time every day.

### **Stay socially connected**

Spend time with friends and family. Get emotional support by sharing your concerns with people you trust.

### **Allow your feelings**

If you notice that you are having strong feelings, acknowledge them. Don't try to ignore or deny them.

### **Gain perspective**

It's natural to worry about "what ifs" and your mind can easily go to worse-case scenarios. Sometimes practicing mindful self-awareness can help you stay focused in the moment.

**Employees and eligible dependents can request Concern counseling and work/life services 24/7 by calling or visiting our**

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