

Here's the article I mentioned in my letter.



HELP KIDS PROCESS TRAGEDY



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Children die in wars. Families have to run away to be safe. Parents and children need rescuing from floods. Pets do too. These are the distressing truths facing all of us now.

Children listen to and watch everything we do. They hear what we say to each other about Ukraine and Russia. They see the images of rivers flowing into people's houses.

They see people crying about what they have lost. They become aware of the

destruction caused by missiles.

Right now, it is a jumble to them. For young children, the two stories may combine into one.

They may start to think that war causes floods. Imagine how scary that would feel for a six-year-old.

Some children may start to worry about their own neighbourhood being flooded with rain. They might even be frightened that Australians are going to have to fight in a war.

For older children and teenagers, they will know the difference. For them, the two events happening at the same time may serve to intensify other worries they already carry. The effect of each story may compound the other.

These are the young people who were so affected by Covid. And now they are surrounded with more uncertainty and fear.

We need to realise our kids have had very little break from a world that has been filled with a sense of danger and looming threat for a while.

The death of Shane Warne has added to a sense of loss for many children and adolescents as well. He was a hero to them. He was someone they admired. He was a father too. His children and his family were openly crying in the media.

Many young people would be devastated too. Because his death was so unexpected, some may have started to worry about the health of their own parents and grandparents.

Grief is visiting us all a little too much recently. Now is the time for us to reassure them.

We need to see their concerns as legitimate and avoid trying to dismiss them because they are too young to

understand. We need to try to not stop trying.

Let them know it is OK for them to have their own reactions to what they are seeing and reading. Tell them they are not alone in feeling the way they do. There are others around them who will be responding in the same way, even if they don't let on.

It is also certain that adults are worried about all these things too.

Encourage them to talk to you or other adults they trust. Show them you can handle their feelings no matter how strong they are. Listen to them. Be prepared to answer their questions directly. Ask them if you can ask them questions too.

Focus on exploring their thoughts and

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views. It doesn't matter if they are not well formed or don't quite make sense. Reinforce how important it is for them to share what is going on inside their heads and tummies.

Keep your answers simple and truthful.

Remind them that there are people out there who are trying to make things better. In Queensland and NSW, where the floods are, there are police officers, ambulance officers, soldiers and lots and lots of volunteers who are rescuing people and pets. These are also the people who will help the clean-up after the water goes away.

Explain to them there are many countries that are trying to stop the war in Ukraine. Many governments around the

world (such as the US, Britain, France, Germany and Australia) are working together to put pressure on the Russian government to stop the war as soon as possible.

Give them something to believe in and be hopeful about. Big problems will eventually be fixed.

It may take some time. It may take a lot of effort. But we will get through it, especially if we work on these problems together.

Do more caring things in your family and neighbourhood. Show your children that kindness still exists in the world.

Make sure they know the people who have always loved them still love them with all their hearts. Tell them they are important to you no matter what happens in the world. Help them really know that you and the whole family want them to keep having fun, learn and enjoy their friends.

Let them feel sad about Warnie. Share some stories about him with them. Pick up a bat and ball and let your backyard become the MCG.

Remind them that fond memories of people are comforting to hold on to.

It is important to help empower them to take some action together.

Make a donation to a charity that helps children in disasters.

Write a letter with them to the Prime Minister so they can tell him what they think should happen. Join a petition with them against the war.

The world is cruel. It is terrifying. But it is the relationships around children that help them to make sense of it all. It is these relationships that can make us feel safe.

We could all do with a little of that right now.