



Helping teens cope with bad world news

When bad news breaks – like the distressing situation in Ukraine – it can be hard to avoid being affected, especially when it's all over TV and social media. Knowing how to discuss it with young people can be even more of a challenge. We've put together some tips on how you can help teens learn about current affairs in a healthy way and what you can do if bad world news is getting them down.

How teens might react

Young people spend lots of time online, so it's common for them to be exposed regularly to news about natural disasters, pandemics, terrorism, war, deaths and other distressing events when simply scrolling through their social media apps.

When they come across bad world news, they might feel:

- anxious and worried
- sad and depressed
- scared
- helpless
- confused
- angry.

Combine this with the normal ups and downs of adolescence, and the teens in your life might be feeling like it's all too much.

How to help teens cope with bad world news

Open the conversation

If you can sense that your teen seems down or that something is off, the first step is to figure out what the issue is. Try asking them how their schooling, friends and hobbies are going. Be non-judgemental and offer to listen if they have anything on their mind.

[Get more tips on figuring out what's up with your teen.](#)

Acknowledge their feelings

Whatever's going on with them, they need reassurance that it's okay to feel the way they do. Acknowledging that they might be feeling stressed, down or helpless reassures them that you care about them and see their concerns as valid.

Dismissing a teen's worries can negatively impact their wellbeing and make them less likely to come to you in the future whenever something's wrong.

Switch off together

Ask them whether they want to take a break from the news. They could listen to some music or do some of their [usual hobbies or self-care activities](#).

You could also offer to take a break with them: go for a walk, play a game or prepare a meal together.

For the long term, you and your family could agree on some ground rules around the news. For example:

- Only check the news at one or two set times per day.
- No news or social media during family times, such as at the dinner table.
- Make sure that everyone spends at least 15 minutes a day on self-care or an activity they enjoy.

[Read more about managing your family's screen time](#) and get more [practical tips for your teenager's wellbeing](#).

Have 'no news' time with your teen

It could be useful for them to have some time where they don't talk or think about what's going on with current affairs. Offer to have 'no news' time together. When hanging out with friends and other family members, your teen could also mention that they don't want to talk about the news.

Learn more about world news together

Discuss world news together

There are many benefits to teens being involved in discussions and debates about current events and news stories. By discussing the news with them, you'll be encouraging them to take an interest in their community, to increase their knowledge of topical issues, and to think critically about what's going on.

They will be able to get different perspectives and learn to develop their own ways of seeing things. Learning about bad world news can be an opportunity for parents to discuss with teens what a 'better' world might look like and how it could be achieved. Talking about events can also help them to process what's happening.

What can your teen do to help with world issues?

Help your teen accept their level of control

There are usually things, big and small, that a person can do to help a situation. Despite this, one person on their own can rarely stop things from happening. Learning to understand how much influence they have over something is an important step in reducing the stress your teen might feel when hearing bad news.

This isn't to say that they shouldn't try helping; in fact, taking positive steps to help people and the community around them will improve their wellbeing. However, we all need to understand the best ways we can contribute to a cause, and learn to accept our limits.

Our Youth service has some more tips to [help your teen cope when things feel out of their control](#).

Using these tips, you can help your teen develop the skills to cope with bad world news. They'll be building their resilience as a whole and be better equipped in the future to deal with whatever comes their way.

Need to talk to someone right now?

National 24/7 crisis support for young people is available from:

- **[Kids Helpline](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)**: 1800 55 1800 <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- **[Suicide Callback Service](https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/)**: 1300 659 467 <https://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au/>
- **[Lifeline](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)**: 13 11 14 <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>