

# Youth Services Department Shares Tips For Parents On 'Talking With Youth About Violence (Conflict) And War'

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## Youth Services Department Shares Tips For Parents On 'Talking With Youth About Violence (Conflict) And War'

The recent violence in the Middle East is alarming for everyone. Our youth may struggle with questions about the information, worry for someone they know is affected, and feel uncertain about whether they are safe.

Recognizing that youth are seeing scary images on television and social media regarding the Middle East, the Palm Beach County Youth Services Department has prepared tips for parents to talk with their children.

Some of these tips include:

- **First, Check In With Yourself:** Children will pick up on your response to the news, so it helps them know that you are calm and in control. If you're feeling anxious or upset, take time for yourself and reach out to other family, friends and trusted people.
- **Be Proactive:** Understand that many children are likely to have heard something already. Choose a time and place when you can bring up the information naturally, which may encourage a child to feel comfortable talking freely.
- **Keep It Age-Appropriate:** Children have a right to know what's happening in the world, but adults are responsible for keeping them safe from distress. Use age-appropriate language, watch their reactions, and be sensitive to their level of anxiety. Conflict can often bring prejudice and discrimination against a person or country. When talking to your children, avoid labels like "bad people" or "evil", and instead use it as an opportunity to encourage compassion. Remind your children that everyone deserves to be safe at school and in the world.
- **Validate Their Feelings:** Be sure to acknowledge your child's feelings and assure them that whatever they feel is natural. Show that you're listening by giving them your full attention and reminding them that they can talk to you or another trusted adult whenever they like.

- **Let Them Know They Are Safe:** A constant stream of upsetting images and headlines can make it feel like the crisis surrounds us. Younger children may not distinguish between images on screen and their reality. They may believe they're in immediate danger, even if the conflict is far away. Older children might have seen worrying things on social media and be scared about how events escalate. Parents can use a map to show the distance between their homes and where the conflict is occurring.
- **It's Okay If You Don't Have All Of The Answers:** Remember that it's okay not to have the answer to every question. Remind your child you care and are there to listen and support them whenever they're worried. Please discuss with your child the information learned through social media or conversations with other peers to understand their perspective of the event. Explain that some information online is not accurate, and it is important to find reliable sources. Consult with other parents, educators, and mental health professionals for support.
- **Limit The Flood Of News & Social Media:** Be mindful of repetitive and lengthy exposure about the conflict. Consider switching channels or positive distractions, such as playing a game or taking a family walk.
- **Keep The Conversation Going:** Continue to check in with your child. How are they feeling? Do they have any new questions or things they would like to talk about? If your child seems worried or anxious about what's happening, keep an eye out for any changes in how they behave or feel.

"It is important for parents to realize children are exposed to this information, and it can be frightening. Age-appropriate communication is vital," said Dr. Twila Taylor, Director of Residential Treatment & Family Counseling at the Youth Services Department.

If a youth or family needs to talk with a professional about the sensitive topics of navigating a conversation about violence and war with your child, the Youth Services Department is here to help. Please get in touch with the Youth and Family Counseling division at 561-242-5714 for free therapy services in Palm Beach County. Trauma-informed, in-person and telemental health services are offered for youth ages 0-22.

Sources: [UNICEF](#) [NPR](#)

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