

Standing with Ukraine

This factsheet supports parents, carers and teachers in utilising the *Standing with Ukraine* video resource

At MacKillop our hearts go out to the communities impacted by the war in Ukraine. We continue to strive to be part of creating stronger communities and a better future.

About *Standing with Ukraine*

Standing with Ukraine is a 5-minute video resource, developed to support children and young people to:

- contextualise the war in Ukraine as they try and make meaning from what they have seen and heard on the news, in conversation and in social media
- empower them to consider acts of empathy and kindness.

It is designed for use at home or in the classroom and is recommended for children and young people in middle and upper primary schools and in secondary school

Why might it be beneficial for children and young people to watch?

We know that many children and young people are thinking about and asking questions about the war in Ukraine, extrapolating from what they have seen and heard on the news, in conversation and in social media. Responding to their questions and concerns thoughtfully is key to addressing big emotions, building their sense of empathy and hope, and empowering them to understand that through small acts they can make a positive impact, both now and in the future.

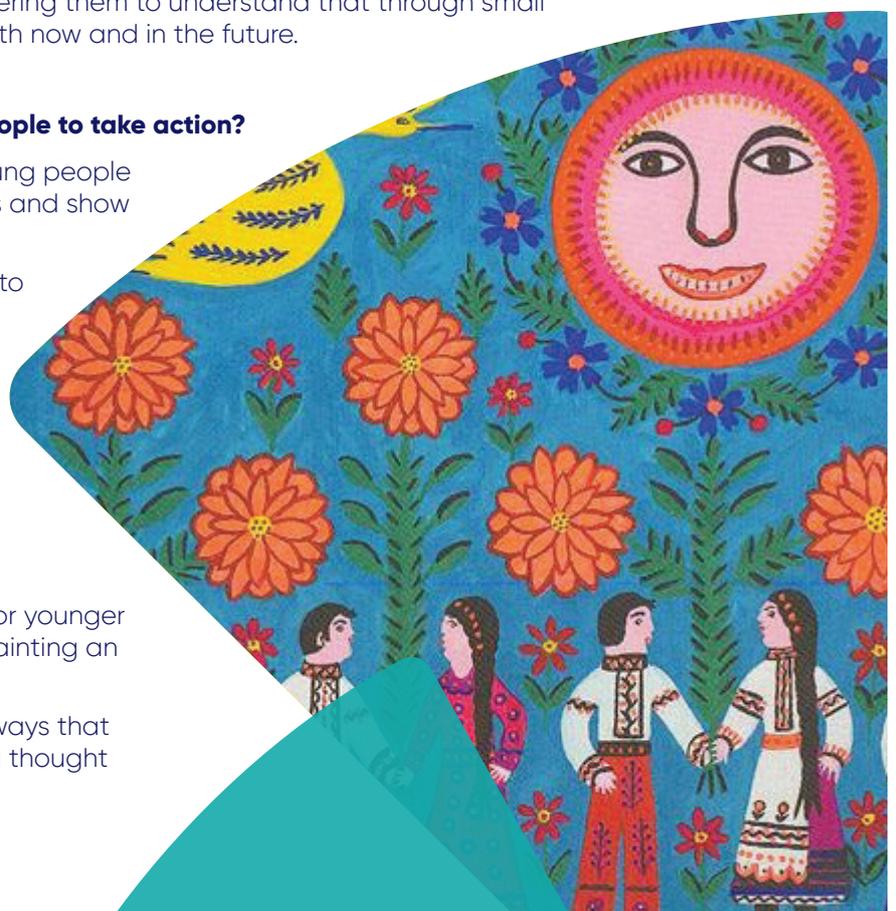
How can I support children and young people to take action?

The video highlights that children and young people can take small actions to spread kindness and show their support for the Ukrainian people.

If children and young people are inspired to act, you could help them in choosing a simple action (reminding them that “no matter how small, no act of kindness is ever wasted”). Some ideas include:

- celebrating the Ukrainian culture through cooking, artwork or stories
- making a donation or fundraising to support impacted families
- a symbolic gesture (especially good for younger children), for example planting tree, painting an image of hope or making a wish.

You can also start a conversation about ways that communities support each other, opening thought about other acts of kindness.



Extra advice and support

Children and young people may have big emotions about war. Just like us, children may feel scared and anxious about war, and have questions about whether the war in Ukraine could pose a danger to them. Children and young people will show this in different ways, influenced by their age, understanding, life experiences, personality and available support.

There are things we can do to provide support and build resilience including:

1. Building a strong sense of safety

Children need to feel the love, protection and comfort of a parent or other familiar caregivers. If they are asking questions about their own safety, you can remind them that they are safe and that other adults are doing everything they can to keep them safe. Your consistent, comforting presence helps them regain a sense of personal emotional and physical safety.

2. Keeping communication about the war calm, clear and simple

Try to respond as calmly as possible to your child's questions and reactions. Try to avoid your child overhearing constant, distressed conversations or repeated media reporting.

If children are asking lots of questions about the war, it's often best to explain the situation honestly, but in age-appropriate language. Answer any questions, but don't add any unnecessary or graphic details. It can be difficult to avoid words such as 'enemies', 'bad or evil people' when talking about everyone's right to be safe and live in peace, but try not to generate further prejudice and hatred.

Allow children the chance to talk, and to share their own worries, sadness and fears. Give them your full attention to show you are listening, even if their worries seem small. Look for what they might not be telling you, but do not force them to talk.

Accept their reactions and feelings and reassure them their reactions are normal. Try not to add additional worries and concerns of your own.

3. Helping to create a sense of hope

As is set out in the video, you can discuss the acts of bravery, generosity and kindness that people are showing towards communities impacted by the war. It gives comfort and hope to know that others care and are offering support in many different ways.

4. Providing avenues to contribute

Showing care for others can be empowering and healing. Using the video as a prompt you can invite your child to think of ways they might take positive action.

Addressing past trauma & identifying big emotions

News about the war in Ukraine may be terrifying and be triggering for children who have previously experienced war and/or community trauma

Keep an eye out for the following adverse reactions you might see in your child:

- high state of alert and stress, inability to calm down
- emotional distress, anxiety and worry
- emotionally flat or frozen
- wanting to stay close together (children being 'clingy')
- children regressing to younger or more 'baby-like' behaviours
- sleeping difficulties, appetite changes
- loss and grief to the point of physical pain (stomach aches, head aches);
- nightmares or intrusive, distressing thoughts
- withdrawing into themselves, avoiding new things
- sensitivity to small noises or movements, jumpiness
- irritability
- troublesome behaviour at home or school, including acting out or academic problems

With consistent safety, love, patience and time, most children can grow through these heightened emotions.

However, do seek additional support, if you feel worried that a child's reactions are too heightened for too long.

Get in touch

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We're collecting stories of empathy and action from young people to share on our website and amongst our networks to highlight the positive change that young people can affect. Email photos and videos to join the groundswell of youth action!