

A Guide to understanding and coping with common mental health issues.

Issues covered in this guide include:

- Warning Signs of a Mental Health Crisis
- Coping With Anxiety
- Coping With Depression
- Coping With Stress
- Coping With Bullying & Cyber-bullying
- Active Listening and how it can help

#### Help And Assistance

If you are concerned about yourself, friends or family get immediate support and information 24/7 by FreeTexting **HELP** to **50015**. Texting 50015 is free of charge from any network and you can text this number even if you have no credit.

For information on Emergency Contacts, National Helplines, Local Support Groups and your nearest Places of Safety visit [www.ineedhelp.ie](http://www.ineedhelp.ie)

Always call 999 if someone is seriously ill or injured, and their life is at risk.

Gardaí / Ambulance / Fire call 999 or 112

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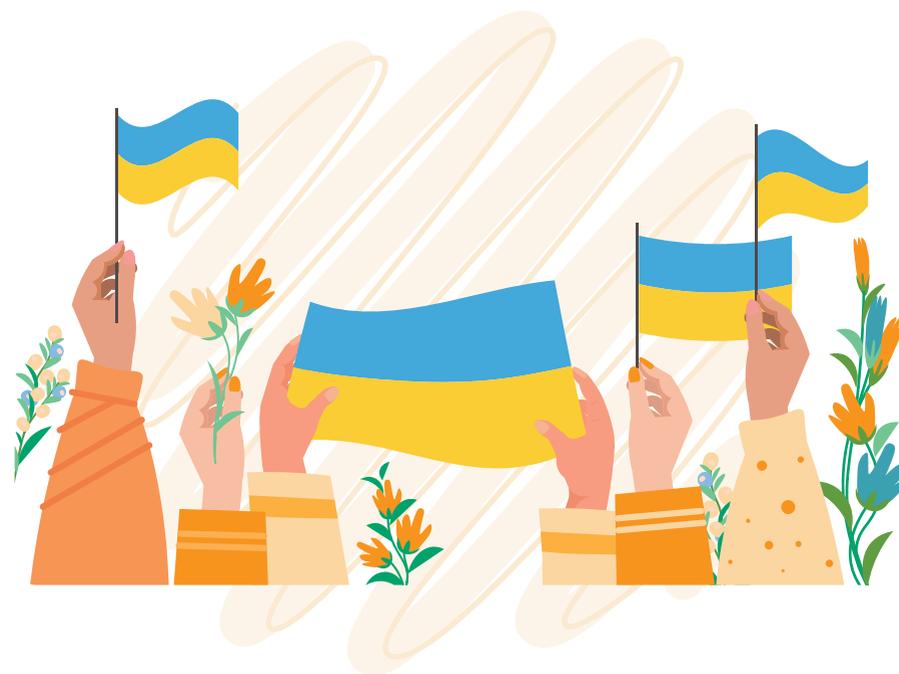
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# Managing *anxiety*

## AROUND THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE



**COPING WITH THE PRESSURES OF DAILY LIFE**  
Short guides to coping with common mental health issues

# Managing *anxiety*

## AROUND THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

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The terrible news from Ukraine has understandably caused global concern. The personal stories of war, including combat, loss and homelessness, may have left you feeling helpless and fearful for the future. It is natural to feel more anxious than usual, but there are steps you can take to understand the conflict while looking after your own mental health.

## How to Reduce Anxiety

Even though nothing can compare to the anxiety felt by those who are directly caught in the conflict, it is understandable if you feel upset or even distressed by news channel reports or videos you see on social media.

Anxiety is a common experience. Regardless of the cause of your anxiety, the following may help you to feel less anxious:

- Try to eat healthily, avoiding fatty or sugary meals and snacks
- Exercise or take part in physical activity – even a brisk walk can help
- Get outside – research shows that being outdoors is beneficial for reducing anxiety
- Prioritise sleep – stick to a reasonable bedtime and avoid using screens before bed to promote good quality rest
- Talk to friends or family – share your concerns with those around you as speaking to others can help you to make sense of your worries
- Write in a journal – getting your feelings out onto paper can help you process them
- Practice mindfulness or meditation – to avoid becoming overwhelmed, give yourself space to reflect on how you are feeling.



## Technology and Anxiety

Your phone is a great way to keep up with what is happening in Ukraine, but it could also be causing additional anxiety. Doomscrolling, or spending an excessive amount of time being exposed to upsetting news, is known to make people feel more anxious.

If you are in the habit of checking the news throughout the day, you will need to put some boundaries in place. This might include limiting your access to the news to just once or twice a day, and only for 20 minutes at a time.

Make sure you only read reports from reliable sources, as fake news is abundant and could worsen your anxiety unnecessarily. Once you have caught up, find something relaxing or distracting to do such as going for a walk, watching TV, or calling a friend for a chat.

Having access to the news 24/7 may affect your sleep. If you are worried about Ukraine, it is easy to doomscroll at night which will only increase your anxiety. To reduce the temptation to scroll, turn your phone off, or even better, leave it downstairs when you go to bed. You may not be able to control what is happening in Ukraine, but you can control how often you read about it.

## Final Thoughts

The war in Ukraine is creating anxiety worldwide. However, it is natural to feel grateful that you are somewhere safer. It is ok to continue enjoying your life, while remaining aware of those who are struggling elsewhere in the world. By taking steps to reduce anxiety, including limiting your exposure to news channels, you can avoid feeling overwhelmed.

## How can I help my child manage anxiety around Ukraine?

War is a very scary topic, and it can be especially terrifying for children. The way you talk about war, and the level of detail that you include, will depend on your child's age. Children need to be reassured that they are safe, and that the conflict is happening in a country far away.

For younger children, you may feel that it is only appropriate to explain the conflict in simple terms. It may be useful to show them where Ukraine is on a map or globe, as some children may misunderstand how far away the country is. Knowing that the conflict is thousands of miles away will help them to realise that they are safe.



Older children may ask more difficult questions about the war. The following may be reassuring for your child:

- Speak calmly and be mindful of the words you use. A gentle explanation, without sharing your own fears, will be less worrying.
- Explain that there have been many wars in countries far away in recent years, and the conflict has never spread close to home.
- Offer comfort by explaining that there are lots of organisations working to help the people of Ukraine.
- Don't expose your child to the news on the TV or radio without screening it first – mute or switch off news outlets when your children are present. If you want to hear the news, listen to it in private. If your children want to be updated, you can paraphrase any developments in an age-appropriate manner later on.
- It is ok if you don't know the answers to all of your child's questions – depending on the age of your child, you can offer to look up the answers or research it together.



Some children may want to know how people in Ukraine are managing. You can mention that some people have left the country and have found safe places to stay, and many remaining civilians have found shelter away from the worst areas of conflict.

If you are finding it difficult to talk about the conflict, or are struggling with your own anxiety, it is natural for your children to pick up on this. You must make sure that you seek your own support as this will make it easier to support your children, too. However, it is ok to let your children know if you don't feel up to discussing the conflict at times. If this is the case, you can:

- Explain that you feel sad about the conflict, and offer to answer their questions later when you are feeling better
- Ask your child to speak to another trusted adult or their teacher, who may be able to answer their queries.

You should not feel guilty if there are times when you don't feel able to discuss the ongoing conflict. We have all been through a stressful and upsetting two years during the pandemic, and many adults are feeling devastated by the humanitarian crisis that is occurring now. You need to ensure you are taking care of your own mental health, so that you do not start to feel overwhelmed.

# What can I do to help those caught in the Ukraine conflict?

It is natural to want to help those who are caught in the conflict. Helping others is known to also improve your own mental wellbeing, so doing something proactive, helpful or practical may also help you to feel better emotionally. Although the conflict is far away, in offering help you may feel a connection to those who are struggling by helping them from afar.

If you want to help, it is best to help via a registered charity or aid agency, so that you can be sure that your efforts will not be in vain. Suitable ways to help and feel useful might include:

- Making a monetary donation to a registered charity, who may use this to provide basic supplies including food, water, shelter or medications, or to re-establish power or communication lines
- Donating items such as clothing, bedding or toiletries, but only if they are requested by humanitarian charities
- Encouraging your school, college or workplace to set up fundraising events to raise money to support charities providing essential care and aid in Ukraine. You could do sponsored events, cake sales, or non-uniform days.



It feels unjust not to be able to easily support families who are caught in the conflict. Remember that if you feel helpless or that there seems to be little you can do to help Ukrainian people, you are not alone.

The way you help others does not have to be limited to Ukraine. If you have made donations but want to do more, consider donating to a food bank near you, volunteering at a charity closer to home, or asking any elderly neighbours if you can help them in any way. Taking small steps to help elsewhere may help you to feel better about your own efforts to help others, even if this will not directly impact those in Ukraine.

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- [National Helplines](#)
- [Local Support Groups](#)
- [Directions to your nearest GP or out of hours clinic](#)
- [Directions to your nearest safe place or refuge](#)

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