

- x Should youth request it, allow for conversations about political dimensions of the conflict.

IMPORTANT RISK FACTORS TO CONSIDER

The degree to which individuals are affected will vary. Children and youth (and potentially their families) at greater risk may include those who have connections to Israel and Palestine, have loved ones significantly affected by the conflict, have personally experienced or are refugees from violent conflict or war, or who suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, or other mental illness. During conflicts like this, it is important to protect children and youth from bullying and harassment caused by misdirected anger. Promoting and modeling compassion and acceptance can help prevent a tragic situation from becoming worse.

POSSIBLE EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

Emotional responses to unsettling circumstances vary in nature and severity from individual to individual. Nonetheless, there are some common reactions that individuals feel when their lives are affected by violence related to international conflict:

- x **Fear:** Fear may be the predominant reaction. This can include fear for the safety for themselves, their families, friends, and the population at large.
- x **Loss of control:** The current world events are something over which people have little control. Lack of control can be overwhelming and confusing. Youth may grasp at any control that they have, including refusing to cooperate, go to school, part with favorite toys, or leave their caregivers.
- x **Anger:** Anger is a common reaction. Unfortunately, anger is often expressed at those to whom youth are closest. Youth may direct anger toward classmates, caregivers, and neighbors. Anger often masks other emotions so adults can help youth identify and manage their underlying feelings.
- x **Loss of stability:** Youth can feel insecure when their usual schedules and activities are disrupted, increasing their level of stress and need for reassurance.
- x **Isolation:** Youth may feel isolated, or as if they're the only one having things they do.
- x **Confusion:** Youth may feel confused about the current conflict, what further dangers might arise, and when the violence will stop. Youth may have trouble understanding the difference between violence as entertainment or in video games and the real events taking place on the news. Some of the modern media violence is unnervingly real. Youth may have difficulty separating reality from fantasy, cartoon heroes and villains from the government soldiers. Separating the realities from media fantasy may require adult help.
- x **Hypervigilance:** Some youth and families may feel desperate to get information about the status of family and other connections. This may cause preoccupation in thoughts, worry, and a desire to constantly scan news sources for any information about the events in the region. This may result in difficulties focusing, sleeping, and being emotionally available for school.

While this conflict may be geographically distant, it has relevance here at home, is ongoing, and is occurring in the context of other stressors. This can contribute to more serious chronic stress and potential associated health problems. Adults should attend to the layers of challenge experienced by youth in this situation. It is critical that schools provide services and support to help youth establish positive social connections and resilience.

HOW CAREGIVERS AND EDUCATORS CAN HELP

- out violently themselves. Decisions related to concerns raised through play or artwork are context dependent, and educators should follow guidance related to [behavior threat assessment and management](#)
- x When in doubt about a youth’s ability to cope, seek support from a community mental health or school-employed mental health professional.

Know the Signs of More Serious Trauma Reactions

