



**GENERAL GUIDE FOR EDUCATOR
ON HOW TO ADAPT CHILDREN
WHO ENDURED STRESS**



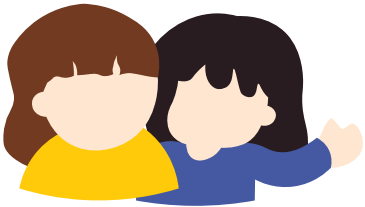
GENERAL GUIDE FOR EDUCATOR ON HOW TO ADAPT CHILDREN WHO ENDURED STRESS

1. Try and create the friendliest-possible, tolerant environment for children by hugging them, smiling at them, giving them presents and telling them sweet words.

2. Hold a preliminary discussion with a class, taking the age of children into account, explain them the situation and make sure to indicate sensitivity and vulnerability of the newcomers, specify the way everyone in the class can help them to adapt to the class (explain the task, give a tour around the school, present the traditions of the class, assist in learning the language).

3. If you use visual content, any type of video, be careful and watch it many times by yourself to avoid showing any insults, controversial sounds and images, which can serve as triggers.

4. Children are afraid of heavy sounds and noise. It is worth taking into account that the higher level of trauma is, the more difficult it is to work with imagination and closed eyes. To close the eyes means to lose control. If at this moment the alert sound goes off, it will aggravate tension.



5. A teacher takes the lead in the group environment, institutes guidelines and rules, which must be complied when new children are introduced.

6. Talk to children softly, using simple words.

7. Explain children the situation with a particular focus on the positive scenarios.

8. Children may respond differently to touches.

9. Do not use the phrases "time is a great healer", "look on the bright side", "you must be grateful, how can you say that, you are a well-brought-up person, if I were you".

10. The educator must be a responsible adult, in order to share children's sorrow.

11. Pace – the slower the better.

12. Intention – better less than overabundance.



13. Children may face challenges in fantasizing and keeping focused. Alternate between the activities as often as possible.

14. If children ask questions, it is essential to respond to them. If we do not know the answers, we must admit it, saying that we need some time to ponder over.

15. It is a natural thing if the children's or adults' words and stories draw tears. We can bring it to our conversation – I am so sorry this is happening, if I could, I would certainly do ... and I want to cuddle you so much. Now I am looking at you and see your enormous power. You have endured severe hardships and you are coping with them.

16. Whenever possible accentuate children's and adults' power.

17. If we set a task, it is essential to split it smaller parts, do not do someone else's work.

18. Children, who start schooling, must be given the tasks they could easily cope with before the war. Now the cognitive sphere is dejected, it is difficult to reflect and concentrate on things. It is not enough to believe in own forces. Please, support any success, even the smallest one.

19. It is necessary to make pauses, to tell children to drink water, go to the toilet, have a rest.

20. Now children will play one and the same game, games with the same plot, they will ask the same questions and this is natural.

21. Children need to hear that it is natural for them to cry quite often, to be naughty, mischievous, to become apathetic or to be frightened, and it is essential to provide them immediately with the instruments which help them to calm down. At this time, it won't be correct for all groups to start managing emotions. If children show emotions, we can work. It is dangerous to stimulate such work by ourselves, so let's follow children's process.

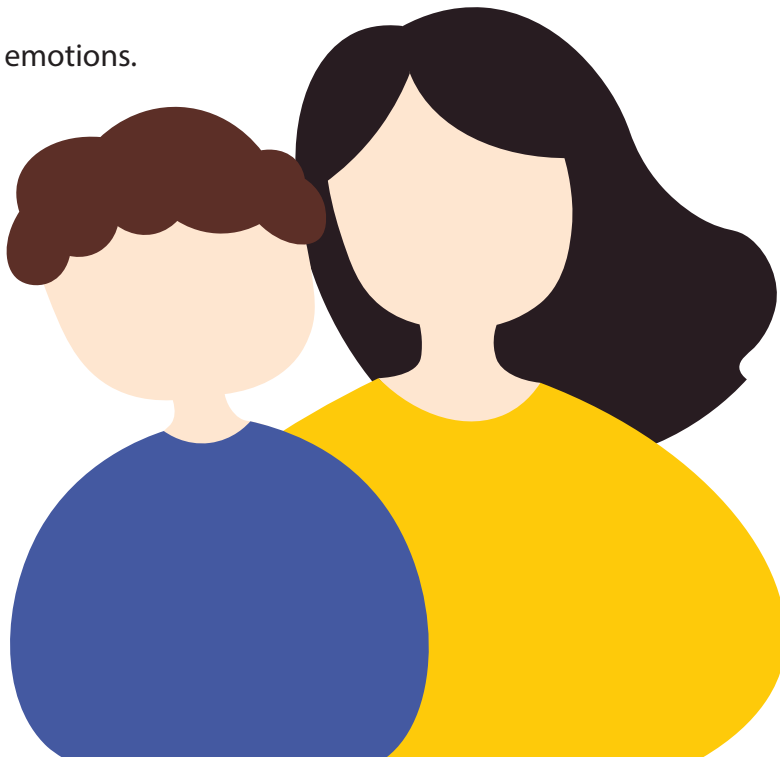
22. It is important to suggest things that will help to overcome stress and strain; the simplest method is body games. Stress has the bodily nature.

23. It is important to remember that traumatic experience causes regress. Let us not be fooled by the height and age of a child, it will be right to subtract several years.

ESSENTIALS FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Stabilization:

1. Any kind of work, in any paradigm, that creates safe, protected environment. Materials: pillows, bed mattresses, blankets, boxes, paper, pencils, glasses, clothes.
2. Contact with earth (it is great if you can plant something, construct something using natural materials).
3. Bodily practices: muscle relaxation, any bodily games (have already been discussed), facial gymnastics.
4. Your own force. Think what superforce you have. What helps you now?
5. Contacting other people.
6. Working with emotions.



If a child does not tell what has happened, be very gentle, do not insist. If a child initiates such a conversation, discuss the subject with him/her.

- If you had to leave your home, it may help to draw or make figures of animals that have shells (snails, small crabs, lobsters); use cubes for kids, LEGO, origami to construct houses.

- It may be helpful to use toys that represent a family, or icecream sticks, origami, etc. to create pictures/figures of human or animal families.

Images of steadfastness – earth, mountains, stones.

- Work with materials whose use you can control – stones, felt-tip pens, chalks, pens, wax pastels, clay, Plasticine, pebbles, threads/yarn, etc.

Water (rivers, liquid) is not therapeutic for everybody now. But the images of water that washes everything off may help a lot, as well as holy water for believers that takes away inner and outer strain, fear, pain.

You have to be very careful when working with water colors – it is the material that evokes and intensifies emotions. It will be useful. But perhaps a bit later.

- If you use pictures, magazine cuttings, it is recommended that that the silhouettes have distinct edges or skirting lines. It is highly advisable to give children and adults a choice.

Now is a good time for teaching children cooking, knitting, etc. Any crafts will help.

HOW TO TALK TO CHILDREN ABOUT THE WAR

TELL CHILDREN THE TRUTH

Give them truthful information; do not overload them with information, take into account their age.

CREATE PROPER CONDITIONS FOR A TALK ABOUT THE WAR

It is crucial that children feel safe and calm.

GIVE YOUR CHILDREN SPACE TO TALK ABOUT THEIR FEARS

Tell your children that you are with them. Take your time. Do not underestimate and do not question their feelings.

Show your children that you understand that the situation is confusing and difficult. Tell them that their feelings are a natural reaction to an abnormal situation, i.e. the war.

Help your children express their feelings, for example while playing games, drawing or telling short stories and fairy tales.

AVOID STEREOTYPES

Avoid harmful stereotypes and generalizations. Whatever our feelings about Russia and Putin are, our children need to know that not all the Russians are bad people.

ASK YOUR CHILDREN WHAT THEY THINK OF IT

Try to listen, ask what your children already know and how they have found out about it.

Show your children that you are happy that you can openly talk to them. Share your views and feelings about the conflict in Ukraine. Allow your children to express their views and emotions.

Do not leave your older children and teenagers alone with this issue. Talk to them about everything they hear and see in the media.

ACKNOWLEDGE THE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION AND BE CAREFUL

Be especially responsive to the children that are largely affected by the war (for example, their relatives are in Ukraine or Russia, their parents serve in the Armed Forces or the children have experienced war trauma).

WHAT ELSE CAN YOU DO TO HELP THEM?

Give your children examples of people and organizations that are helping.

Tell the stories of people who have survived the war and coped with it.

Try to come up with a way to tackle the problem.

Sympathize and maintain other important values.

Do not forget about yourself. Actively seek positive experiences in communication with your children.



Remember that mutual participation, mutual support, contact and examples of good practice are the best ways to overcome unexpected challenges.

HOW CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS REACT TO A TRAUMATIC EVENT

PRESCHOOLERS (3-5 YEARS OLD)

Typical reaction:

- Nightmares, crying at night, calling for help;
- New fear of darkness or animals;
- New or increased clingy behavior (following their parents around the house, holding their parents' hands, etc.), fear of being separated from their parents;
- Bed-wetting, constipation;
- Speech disorder (stuttering);
- Sudden awkwardness (it is accompanied by trembling or frightened facial expression);
- Disorientation, running around aimlessly;
- Fear of staying alone or being with strangers.

Useful tips:

- Encourage the expression of emotions by playing with your child and through creative activities;
- Provide emotional reassurance and physical comfort;
- Pay more attention to your child;
- Help your child express their emotions associated with the loss of toys or pets;
- Make sure your child gets a good night's sleep;
- Allow your child to sleep in the same room with their parents until they are ready to return to their own room .

JUNIOR SCHOOL AGE (5-11 YEARS)

Typical reaction:

- egressive behaviour: finger sucking, irritability, crying;
- typical reaction is to stay with parents, to worry about safety;
- aggressive behaviour at home or at school;
- competition with siblings for parental attention;
- nightmares, fear of the darkness;
- unwillingness to go to school;
- keep an emotional distance from peers;
- loss of interest and poor concentration at school;
- headache and other physical problems or other manifestations of the child depression;
- fears of bad weather, fear of recurrence of events.

Useful tips:

- be patient and tolerant;
- give your child the opportunity to play with someone;
- create an opportunity for your child to discuss with someone what had happened;
- temporarily lower your expectations of your child at school and at home;
- create a daily routine for the child, but do not overload it;
- if the child needs it, tell about measures which will be taken in case of future disaster.

SENIOR SCHOOL AGE (11-14 YEARS)

Typical reaction:

- physical problems (headache, skin rash, indigestion, psychosomatic problems);
- sleep disorders, eating disorders;
- unappealable disobedience to authoritarianism;
- refusal to perform any duties;
- problems at school (aggression, psychological distance from peers, loss of interest);
- loss of interest in socialising with peers.

Useful tips:

- temporarily reduce the requirements for the effectiveness and success of the child;
- propose joint measures aimed at recovery agenda;
- encourage your child to be involved in joint activities together with peers;
- support participation in a group discussion on how to survive disaster and live it together;
- agree on structured but simple household chores;
- give children time to be attentive. do not strain them.

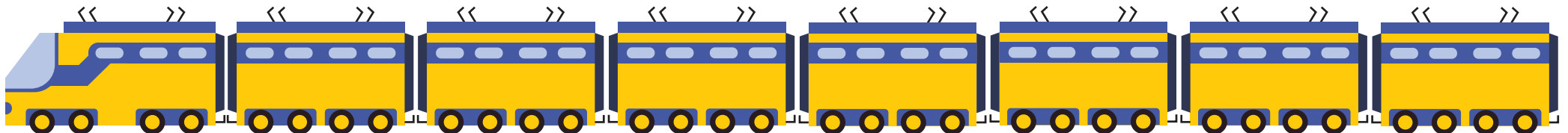
ADOLESCENCE (14-18 YEARS)

Typical reaction:

- psychosomatic symptoms (rash, digestive problems, asthma, headache or other physical problems);
- depression, aggressive behavior;
- confusion or poor concentration;
- poor results in school or sports;
- isolation, indifference;
- change in behaviour between peers, loss of friendships;
- sleep and eating disorders;
- excess or lack of energy;
- irresponsibility and / or provocative behaviour;
- loss of interest in the fight against parental control, apathy.

Useful tips:

- encourage the child to take part in social work;
- support the idea to return to social activities, sport, hobbies;
- discuss the catastrophe that the peers, family, relatives have experienced;
- lower your expectations concerning the success at school for some time;
- involve the child in family discussions about fears and reaction to the catastrophe but don't insist on it.



REPORT

how to help the child in a critical situation:

- 1) Keep in contact / stand in front of the child.
- Can you see and hear me? Nod if you can.
- 2) It is necessary to tell the child your name.
- My name is ... "I've come to help you".
- 3) What is your name?
- 4) Where did you go? What were you doing when the accident happened?
- 5) Repeat the answer distinctly. Add something if you know the situation without details and emotions.
- 6) Give a simple task. How many girls and boys were there in the class?
- 7) Normalization. All feelings are a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances.
- 8) If the child is in a stupor give something to him (a book, a notebook or a pen).
- 9) Here is some water – have a drink (the child should take it by himself to regain control).
- 10) How did you usually cope with stress?

HOW TO HELP THE CHILD ADAPT TO A NEW ENVIRONMENT, SCHOOL AND NOT TO HURT?

Anger, irritability, anxiety, problems with sleep or nutrition. Nowadays it is normal behavior for children who had to leave their homes because of the war. Many pupils will attend their first classes abroad. How can parents help their children overcome the period of adaptation at school?

How long does the period of adaptation to a new country and school last?

It takes from 6 months to 1 year to adapt to a new country, 2 months - to school. Remember that children adapt faster than adults.

How to start?

- Be calm. If there is a possibility choose a new school together and go there to have a look.
- Support the child and don't expect much. Explain that the teachers will pay a lot of attention to him in order to help.
- Talk a lot and ask about the school. You may realize that it is useful to attend some extra classes.

How not to hurt the child?

- Don't use the phrase "Think about your future!" It will lower the productivity and interest. The child is suffering from stress and it worsens his or her health, attention, memory.
- Avoid such phrases as "Stop crying, others feel even worse!" It's important for children to express their emotions.

What to do in case of bullying?

- Don't withdraw yourself. Initiate a conversation with a teacher or a principal.
- Be in constant contact with the child. Talk and rate mood states.
- Explain that we shouldn't succumb to provocations and praise your child when he/she defends himself/herself.

Joyful expectation of classes and meetings with new classmates are the signs of successful adaptation. If the child feels unhappy, depressed or has some communication problems, etc. for a long time, you should consult a specialist.



WHAT TO DO IF A CHILD HAS SOME BEHAVIORAL DISORDERS?

If a child doesn't want to sleep alone or he/she has the fear of bad dreams?

- Allow your child to sleep with you (but say that it's temporary).
- Every day before going to bed read books, draw, pray, sing, etc.
- Hug your child saying that he/she is safe and stay together with him/her. Bad dreams come from depressing thoughts, so tell his/her favourite story or make it up with your child.

If a child is worried that something bad can happen to you?

- Say that you are safe now.
- Adults should consider other people taking care of their children in case when something bad happens to the parents (this will help adults to cope with anxiety).

If a child is naughty, cries, etc. when you leave him/her or he/she can't stay without you?

- Help your child to express his/her feelings and create the connection with that he/she went through.
- Tell your child that you love him/her and you will think about him/her; tell where you go, when you come back, where and with whom you leave him/her, and give your photo or something else and, of course, call.

If there are some problems with nutrition (your child refuses to eat or overeats, etc.)?

- Don't make your child eat, as a rule eating habits normalize with the reduction of stress.
- Choose products and cook meals together, eat together and make eating a pleasant and fun activity.
- If your child suddenly began to lose weight – you should consult your doctor.

If the child does dangerous things and his/her behavior is inappropriate (he/she is scared of something, etc.)?

- If your child fantasizes about monsters or tells horror stories, then help him/her to banish them and conquer the force of evil.
- Explain the dangerous consequences of what he/she does, show the positive ways to get your attention.
- If your child is frightened, you should explain how you can protect him/her, help to identify the fears and make sure that he/she is safe.
- If your child continues to remember a terrible event – ask for professional help.

If the child has stopped speaking, as usual, he/she is silent or has difficulty expressing what worries him/her?

- Give your child the sense of love, support, understanding and acceptance. Then, feeling safe, he/she will restore his/her lost skills.
- Provide your child with some other activities that can help to express himself/herself.
- Draw emojis with different expressions of feelings and then come up with some stories about each of them.

If your child expresses excessive motor activity?

- Help a child to organize their physical activity: do your child's favourite things together and engage them in different types of activities.

What to do if a child is overdemanding, overcontrolling or stubborn?

- It is normal, because a child doesn't feel safe. However, the child will continue feeling unsafe if it is only you who controls everything.
- Let your child control small things (they can decide what to wear, what to read, what to eat, where to walk, what kind of sport to go in for, etc.)
- Giving your child a chance to choose and control, remember about the balance between structuring time and important daily activities.

What to do if a child has temper tantrums, is capricious or cries more than usual?

- Show your child that you understand their emotions caused by the absence of their favourite toys, activities etc. If possible find something to substitute them or just redirect the child's attention to a different activity.
- As the situation is unusual, the child may cry and scream, support them, tolerate tantrums more than before, respond to them with love.
- You should seek professional help if the tantrums are excessive and occur very often.

What to do if a child is aggressive and fights?

- When a child tries to hit you it should be made clear that such behavior is inappropriate and you don't allow to be treated like this (hold your child's hands to prevent hitting).
- If the child is old enough, suggest some constructive patterns of behavior in this situation (how to ask, how to respond etc.)
- Help your child learn alternative ways of expressing anger (drawing, games, physical exercise, art etc.)

What to do if a child cries a lot?

- Support the child, stay close, take care and talk to them.
- Help to feel hope for the future.
- Plan your life and favorite things you will do (walks, excursions, classes, games, hikes, meetings with friends, etc.).

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH SOMEONE WITH POST-TREUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD) FROM WAR:

1. Keep in mind that people who have been in a war zone are usually sensitive to any sudden, loud noises or sounds. You should speak in a calm voice, speaking slowly and distinctly, showing your understanding and support.
2. It is important to show insight during communication. Try to analyze not only the interlocutor's words and intonation, but also read and interpret his/her emotions and feelings which can be observed in facial expressions, gestures and other nonverbal means of communication.
3. Start a conversation by asking simple questions like what his/her name is. Let this person take his/her time to tell what he/she would like to tell you about. If a person is unwilling to talk about his/her traumatic experiences in a war zone, you should not ask such questions. However, if a person starts a conversation himself/herself, willing to talk about what they saw or experienced, encourage them to do so.
4. It is important to "legalise" emotions and work carefully with their manifestations, give tools that will calm down and get back self-control.
5. You should not tell people what they have to feel think or act now, or point to the reasons for their suffering, motivating it by their personal behavior or views, or emphasize how they should have acted before, because it reduces their self-efficacy.
6. People who have experienced a loss should not be told "you can handle it"; comparisons, statements such as "I understand how it is – to survive a loss. My... died, and it was very difficult" should be avoided. Comparison shifts the focus from the person suffering to you. This is perceived as indifference or a lie, and it will not help those who are experiencing loss.
7. Not everybody, especially at the present situation, fancies being touched. Therefore, it is not worth while trying to touch every person who is in trouble.
8. It is essential to give information about the location of state and public organizations providing services. One must be ready for repeating this information, reminding people about the possibility of being helped in case they display fear or anxiety. When people are scared and have not adapted to a new place, they are often incapable of perceiving and analyzing the information presented to them by others.
9. It is important to be friendly and empathic, even if the interlocutors' behaviour is complicated. One should not say "Everything will be fine", "Time is a great healer", "At least you have survived", "Every cloud has a silver lining", "If I were you ...", etc. It is better to let the person in trouble feel support, safety, peace and quiet, and offer help, saying "I am sorry about what is going on", "I am at your side", "I am with you right now", "What can I do for you at the moment?", "How can I help you?".
10. It is important not only to be a good listener but also show respect for interlocutors, to talk about achievements, resources and prospects. It is essential to say, "Now I'm looking at you and I can see how strong you are", "You've been through considerable hardships, and you're doing well", "What gives you strength?", "What will make you even stronger?", "This too shall pass. It's a difficult situation, but it won't last an eternity. It will be over", "We will go through it together".
11. It is necessary to help a person regain a sense of control, identify their sphere of activity and responsibility.
12. It is advisable to urge people to stay connected with their friends and family, as well as with those who have faced similar situations and been able to cope with distress. With proper social support, combat participants and displaced individuals are better prepared to cope with stressful situations.