



A S S O C I A T E S

WAR WORRY

By CMG Associates, Inc.

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The talk of war is impacting our homes, families and workplaces. **Feelings of anxiety, fear, helplessness and vulnerability** are affecting adults as well as children. These feelings **are normal under the circumstances**: acknowledging and respecting our feelings makes us less passive, less vulnerable, and as a result, better able to cope. Sharing feelings with family, friends and colleagues helps people to accept reality and deal with their anxieties. While we should not ignore our anxiety, we should try not to let it take over our lives, either. We can decide how much this will affect how we behave. Some people will choose to stay closer to home and will avoid large public events and travel, while others will decide that nothing will get in the way of their planned vacation or celebrations. **The uncertainty around us is real, we cannot control it; but we do have control over how we react to it.**

If anxiety is getting the best of you, Douglas Mennin, PhD, director of Yale University Anxiety and Mood Center makes the following suggestions:

- Think about the serious issues of the day, but don't get caught up in a loop of worrying about the same things over and over. Keep things in perspective.
- Stay on regular sleep cycles.
- Exercise, relaxation techniques, and yoga are all helpful for daily stress and worry.
- Get comfortable with the notion that it is OK to go on with your daily activities even if you sometimes feel insecure and emotional.

AT WORK

A period of crisis can bring people together. It can also create tension within and between people. We cherish our right to our individual personal opinions. In the workplace in particular it is important to recognize that there is likely to be a diversity of opinion on the current world crisis. Co-workers may have relatives or friends who have been deployed to the frontlines in the Middle East while others may be marching in anti-war demonstrations. **Sensitivity to and consideration of different perspectives are especially important at this time of increased stress for all.**

AT HOME

This is a time to connect with family and friends. We are all in this together and a sense of community provides real support.

Helping Children Cope

In talking to children, we should pay attention to how much information we share. It could tip the balance between calming and inflaming fears. Trying to protect children by telling them they don't need to worry about the situation might lead to greater concern if the child feels that their parents are not paying attention. On the other hand, too much information can lead to increased anxiety.

- Listen carefully to your children's questions. They will guide your responses. Make sure you understand what they are asking before answering. If necessary, ask a clarifying question such as "what do you mean?" When a five year old asks what is going to happen, they are likely wondering if anything is going to happen to their family or daily routine, will they have school tomorrow for example. When an eleven or twelve year old asks the same question, they might be interested in discussing the politics of the current situation.
- Acknowledge the reality of the situation: Children are exposed to a great deal of information in the media and at school. They know that we are embarking on a war and that there are dangers involved. Give them the opportunity to express their understanding of the situation and their fears.
- Clarify misunderstandings.
- Let your children know that it is the adults' job to keep them safe, and that you and the police and fire departments and the military are doing their very best to ensure their safety.
- Maintain Routines: As much as possible, keep to normal daily routines – children find them comforting.
- Limit Exposure to violent TV news, movies and videos. If older children are interested in the news, watch with them whenever possible and discuss the content.
- Get Them To Talk: If your child isn't talking to you, gently bring up the topic.
- Notice How They Act: Watch for signs of distress, such as nightmares, irritability, sleeplessness, or clinginess. If you are concerned about a child's behavior call for help.

Remember that children and adults who have been traumatized before are more at risk in times of crisis. Family members of deployed personnel are more vulnerable as well.

RESOURCES: If you have any questions or concerns, your **EAP** is here to help. Call **CMG Associates** at **1-800-444-7262**.

For more information:

http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/terror_general.html

http://www.nasponline.org/NEAT/children_war_general.html

<http://helping.apa.org/daily/anthrax.html>

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/pphb-dgspsp/publicat/oes-bsu-02/comm_e.html