



How to talk about the war and the flood of news with children

Parents' evening model for lower and upper comprehensive school

MLL | 2022



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Objectives of the event

The purpose of the MLL parents' evening is to

1. help parents talk about the thoughts and feelings evoked by the war in Ukraine and the related flood of news with their child
2. make sure that no children experience bullying or discrimination in school or other communities because of their background.



A top-down view of several hands holding various smartphones. The phones are arranged in a loose circle, with some screens facing the viewer and others angled away. The hands are of different skin tones, suggesting a diverse group of people. In the top right corner, there is a white, hand-drawn scribble. The background is a blurred, textured surface, possibly a floor or pavement.

**The war does not remain
invisible to children and young
people living in the digital age**

How should you talk to children about the war?



1. Give the child time and space to talk about how they feel. Start by asking what the child thinks and knows about the situation.
2. Talk to your school-aged child about conflicts. Stick to the facts, avoid being overly dramatic and try to stay calm.
3. Tell them that adults are currently working to resolve the situation.
4. Help the child understand that the things described in the news are not a threat to them
5. Encourage optimism. Tell them that despite the news, there are fewer wars in the world today.
6. Shield the child from adult concerns. If you are distressed by the news, take a break from following them and do things that improve your personal wellbeing.



Discuss

- Millaisia havaintoja olette tehneet lasten mahdollisista reaktioista sotaan?
- Miten olette puhuneet asiasta koulussa ja kotona?
- Miten olette sanoittaneet sitä, mistä sodassa on kysymys?
- Miten olette luoneet lapselle turvallisuuden tunnetta?





Children and young people in the flood of news

The war is present online

- The events of the war are conveyed to children and young people online, on social media and in message threads.
- Children can accidentally come across horrific images or videos, but can also find them by deliberately searching for them.
- Not only upsetting content, but also misleading information can spread through the social media sites commonly used by children and young people.

Parents are responsible for the safety and wellbeing of children, also in digital environments.



Protecting and being present for your school-aged child

1. Ask the child or young person what kind of war-related content they have come across on their or their friends' devices. Listen to what the child thinks and feels about this content. Discuss these thoughts and feelings together.
2. Limit the use of social media sites that contain upsetting or distressing content.
3. Upsetting images or videos should not be shared with peers, for example. The same goes for information that appears suspicious.
4. In the middle of a crisis, it may be hard to know what content is true and what is false. Talk about the kind of news content that can be trusted.

Are there younger siblings in the family?

- Children under school age do not need to follow the news.
- Avoid watching or listening to the news in front of the child.
- Try to stay calm. Even a small child can easily sense when an adult is upset, regardless of what the adult says. A calm adult makes the child feel safe.
- Talk about what you think and how you feel about the news with other adults.



Discuss

- What have you noticed when it comes to children's social media use and their reactions to images of the war?
- What have you done to protect the child from upsetting images, news and disinformation?



**As social media
and the news
are full of war, it
is important to
broach this topic
at home.**



The goal of information warfare is to influence people

Disinformation means false or misleading information that is produced intentionally.

Misinformation means false information that is produced or spread unintentionally.

Visual influence, deepfake and other video and photo manipulations, memes.

The goal of **information warfare** is to pit the different sides against each other and create an enemy image.

Fake news means intentionally produced information that is partially or completely false. Imitates journalistic content.

Propaganda is most often produced by those in power. Portrays a one-sided picture of things that tries to influence people's values, emotions and opinions in favour of those in power.

Foster media literacy

- Fact or opinion? What does the content aim to do? An enormous amount of content is spreading through social media, but not all information is based on facts. During crises, social media streams are also filled with personal opinions, experiences, fake profiles and influencing through information.
- Proper news is based on statements from reliable authorities and experts and verified information and it reflects on events from multiple sides. Traditional media are bound by the Guidelines for Journalists, which support reliable communication.

Fake news and hate speech challenge people's access to information

Does the source of information seem reliable? Does the content try to influence the way you think or appeal to your emotions? Could it be fake news?

- Use your media literacy skills to study the images, videos and infographics. It is often hard to distinguish between true content and content taken out of context or manipulations, such as deepfake videos. It is always good to practice caution online.
- Identify hate speech that discriminates against people or groups of people and tries to turn people against each other.
- Do not pass on hearsay or questionable content.

Talk about your child's media environment

Ask the child or young person :

- What kind of war-related content do they come across online, in online games or on their phone? What does the situation look like on the child's social media?
- What thoughts, feelings or questions do they have about the situation?
- Which sources do they use to search for and gather information? Who do they follow online?
- How is the war present in their circle of friends or in their online communities?



Effects of the war of children's communities



Bullying caused by the war must be addressed

- Children of Russian descent have reported bullying and discrimination when they have contacted the MLL helpline and chat for children and young people.
- Bullying is a group phenomenon. That is why every child and young person can help prevent it by not accepting it and by defending the bullied.
- Broach the topic of bullying with your child or young person. Remind them that nobody should be bullied because of their background – and for no other reason either!



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Setting an example as an adult matters

- **Adults' responsibility:** how your example (the way you talk, behave) can increase or reduce children's prejudice and discriminatory behaviour.
- It is important to talk to children about individuals not being responsible for the actions of national governments. The war is not the fault of children or individual people.
- Let's remember that people are similar in all countries; they can feel happy or sad, they dream about the same things and want to live in peace.

Discuss

Teachers / school professionals:

- Has the school noticed any bullying, discrimination or negative comments related to the war and a pupil's background? What has been the school's response?
- How are these things prevented?

Parents:

- Has your child talked about bullying, discrimination or negative comments related to the war and their or another pupil's background? What was the incident like?
- What can parents do at home to change things? How about together with the school and other parents?



If you are concerned about a child or a young person

- Talk to the child if they seem worried or unhappy, or the war is constantly present in their dreams, comments, play or drawings.
- Older children may also discuss the topic among themselves. Be aware of the mood and the comments of your child or young person. Offer them chances to talk about the topic at home.
- If the anxiety symptoms of the child or young person are extremely severe and do not improve in a few days, it is worth consulting a professional (such as a nurse or the school psychologist).



Encourage optimism and belief in the future

- Stress the fact that despite the worrying things shown in the news, there are also many adults who are working to resolve the situation as we speak.
- Also emphasize that continuing the war is not in anybody's interests. Tell the child that despite everything, there are fewer wars in the world today and people's wellbeing has improved, and we are working to make sure that this would also continue to be the case.
- Create a calm atmosphere and stick to your everyday routines. Be present for your child
- Children and young people enjoy spending time and doing things together. You can play board games, read a book, spend time outdoors, make crafts, bake, watch family movies.





Parents' evening
model based on
articles from
Vanhempainnetti and
Nuortennetti. You can
have more
information:

MLL tukee Ukrainan
tilanteen käsittelyssä -
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Information and support for parents

Discussion support (finnish)
[MLL:n Vanhempainpuhelin](https://www.mll.fi/vanhempainpuhelin)
p. 0800 92277
Also chat and webletter service

MLL Vanhempainnetti (finnish)
www.mll.fi/vanhempainnetti

MLL Mediaeducation
<https://www.mll.fi/en/about-mll/media-education>





Netti ja media

Näkökulmia nettiin, tukea mediataitoihin. Jokaisella on mahdollisuus tehdä netistä parempi paikka.



SOITA



KIRJOITA



CHATTAA

Support and information
for children and young people

MLL Nuortennetti (finnish)

www.nuortennetti.fi

MLL's free reliable phone for
children and young people (finnish)

p. 116 111

also chat and webletter service

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Thank you!

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