

**I CAN'T GET IT
OUT OF MY HEAD**

**HOW HEARING ABOUT WAR
AND CONFLICT CAN AFFECT
ME, AND HOW TO GET HELP**



INTRODUCTION

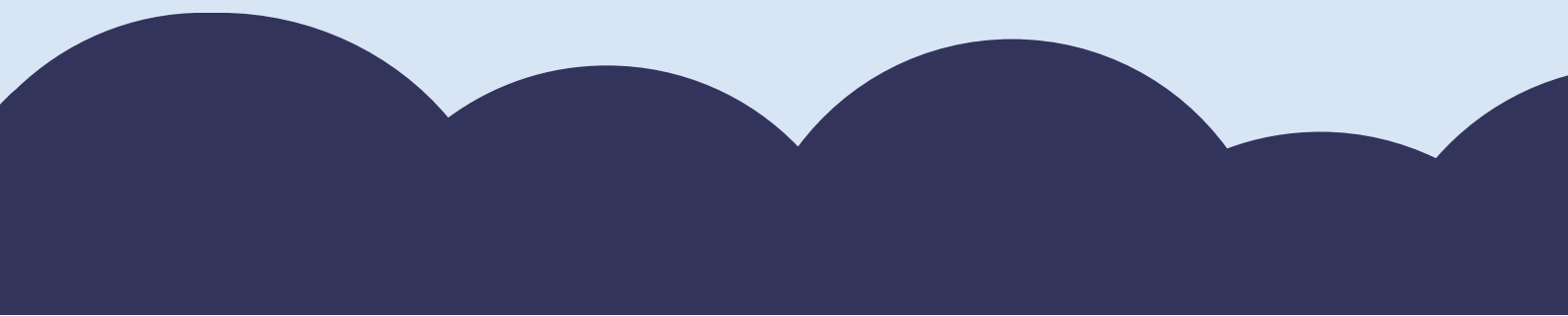
I've Seen Something Worrying on the News

You may have read about or seen that is conflict happening in Israel and Palestine, or maybe someone you know has told you about this. It is normal to feel very worried, scared, anxious, angry, or sad about what is happening. You might also be worried about how the news is affecting your friends and family.

You may want to keep up to date with the news, but it is okay to turn it off sometimes. You might have seen some very scary or upsetting images and videos that you wish you hadn't seen. You might also have read something that doesn't make sense. Not all news stories are correct, mistakes can be made when information is reported. This means that some news can make things sound different to what they are. Make sure you ask a trusted adults to help you check if a news story is helpful.

You are not alone:

You might choose to read this booklet alone or with a trusted adult – that could be someone at school or someone at home. Adults will try their best to answer your questions and help you talk about your difficult feelings.



WHAT IS SECONDARY TRAUMA?

Events happening around the world can impact us even if they are happening far away. There are many ways you might be exposed to what is happening in Israel and Palestine:

- Seeing what is happening with your own eyes - for example seeing a video online or that someone has shared on SnapChat or TikTok.
- Hearing about the events in conversation or on the news.
- Listening to podcasts, documentaries, or reading articles about the conflict.

Sometimes this exposure to other people's very negative experiences – their trauma - can affect you more than you might expect. Or it might affect you in ways that are hard to connect to what you saw or heard about in the first place. Psychologists call this **secondary trauma**.

Secondary trauma is more likely if:

- You have suffered traumatic events yourself, even if they are very different to those you are hearing about in the news.
- People in your family or community have experienced trauma, especially if they had similar experiences to those you are hearing about in the news.
- You or your family members have been treated unfairly in ways they can't do anything about. For example, unfair treatment because of the prejudice of more powerful people.
- You know people who are affected by the events you are seeing or hearing about.
- What you saw or heard about was very new or unexpected.
- You feel unsure about what is true and what might not be.
- You feel helpless and don't know what to do next.



WHAT DOES SECONDARY TRAUMA FEEL LIKE?

"I DON'T FEEL SAFE IN PLACES I NORMALLY FEEL SAFE"

"I'M FINDING IT HARD TO TRUST PEOPLE I NORMALLY TRUST, INCLUDING MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY"

"I FEEL LESS CONFIDENT THAN I USUALLY DO AND I FEEL LIKE I'M NOT IN CONTROL IN SITUATIONS I USUALLY FEEL CONFIDENT AND IN CONTROL"

"IMAGES AND THOUGHTS OF WHAT I'VE HEARD ABOUT KEEP POPPING INTO MY HEAD AND MAKING ME FEEL UPSET OR WORRIED. IT'S MAKING IT HARD TO CONCENTRATE"

"I'M HAVING TROUBLE MAKING DECISIONS AND FEELING WORRIED ABOUT THINGS I WOULD NORMALLY FEEL EXCITED ABOUT"

SOCIAL MEDIA AND ALGORITHMS



Think about what you watch and read online: Notice how you feel when you look at it. Does it make you feel worried?

Fact checking (finding out if something is true) is even more important now as information is available 24 hours a day, every day. Talk to a trusted adult and ask them questions if you want to understand what is happening during times of conflict.

“Algorithms”

Think of algorithms as digital set of instructions that helps social media platforms decide what content to show you. Algorithms do this by learning from what content you engage with, such as what you like, comment on, and share.

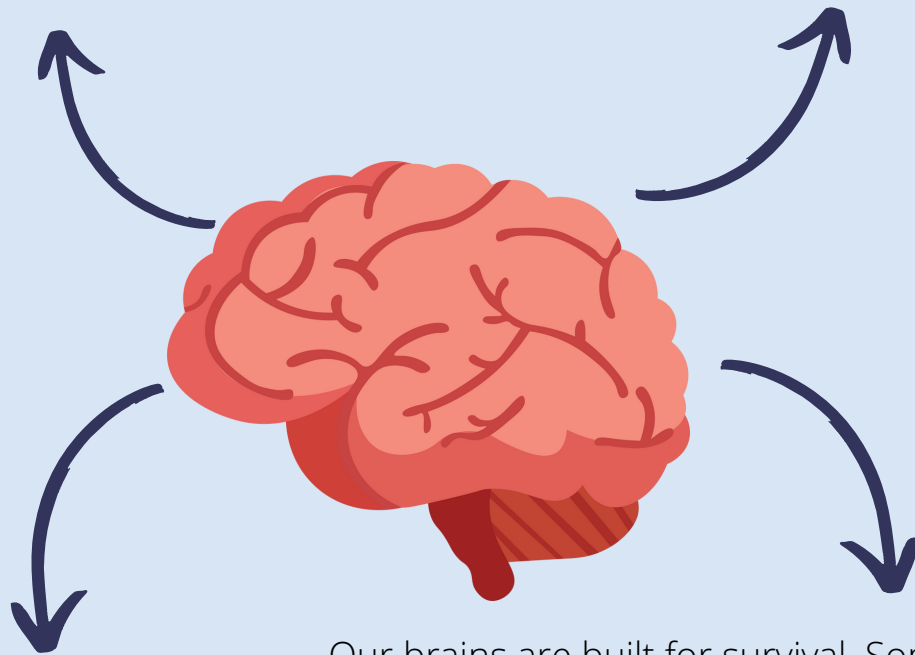
Social media platforms will use algorithms to keep you engaged by showing you similar posts. Remember, algorithms learn from what you engage with! Try and spend time off social media platforms and if you see something that upsets you, speak to your trusted adult.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I'M FEELING WORRIED OR UPSET?

1. Understanding Your Brain

Learning about how our brains work can help us notice when it is doing things that lead to us feeling sad, angry, anxious and worried. It's the first step to taking control of our brain!

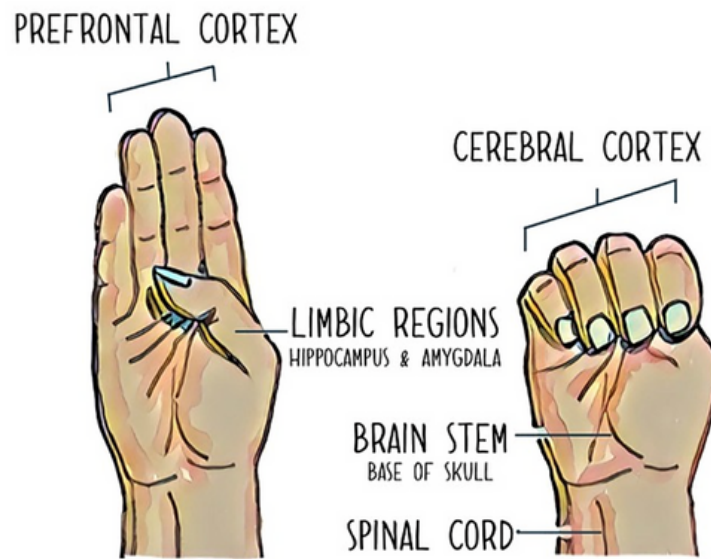
On the next few pages you will find information that will help you understand **your** brain. Can you notice these things happening?



Our brain is like a muscle - the more we train it, the stronger it becomes.

Our brains are built for survival. Sometimes they get **too** good at survival and start seeing threats in our everyday lives. This can lead to us feeling stressed, anxious and panicky when actually we need to teach our brain that it is safe to relax!

Dr Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain



The Stress Response

You might sometimes feel "overwhelmed" by your emotions. This is normal! This is what happens when the part of our brain responsible for **emotions** (the **limbic regions**) take over. Our emotions and feelings are much more powerful than the **thinking** part of our brain (the **prefrontal cortex**) so when they take over, it can be really hard to think rationally.

In the picture above, the fingers represent the **thinking** parts of our brain. When something triggers a big emotional reaction in our brain we "**flip our lid**" and the the **emotional** part of our brain is left in control! When this happens, it's really hard to have conversations or think about what's happened.

Can you think of times when your emotional brain has been in control?

FIGHT

- Feelings of irritability
- More ready to engage in arguments with others
- Excessive competitiveness or wanting to challenge people
- Feeling very angry and annoyed
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FLIGHT



- Reluctance or refusal to engage in activities
- "People pleasing" to avoid conflict or confrontation
- Avoiding other people or social interactions
- Avoiding situations that might make you anxious
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FREEZE

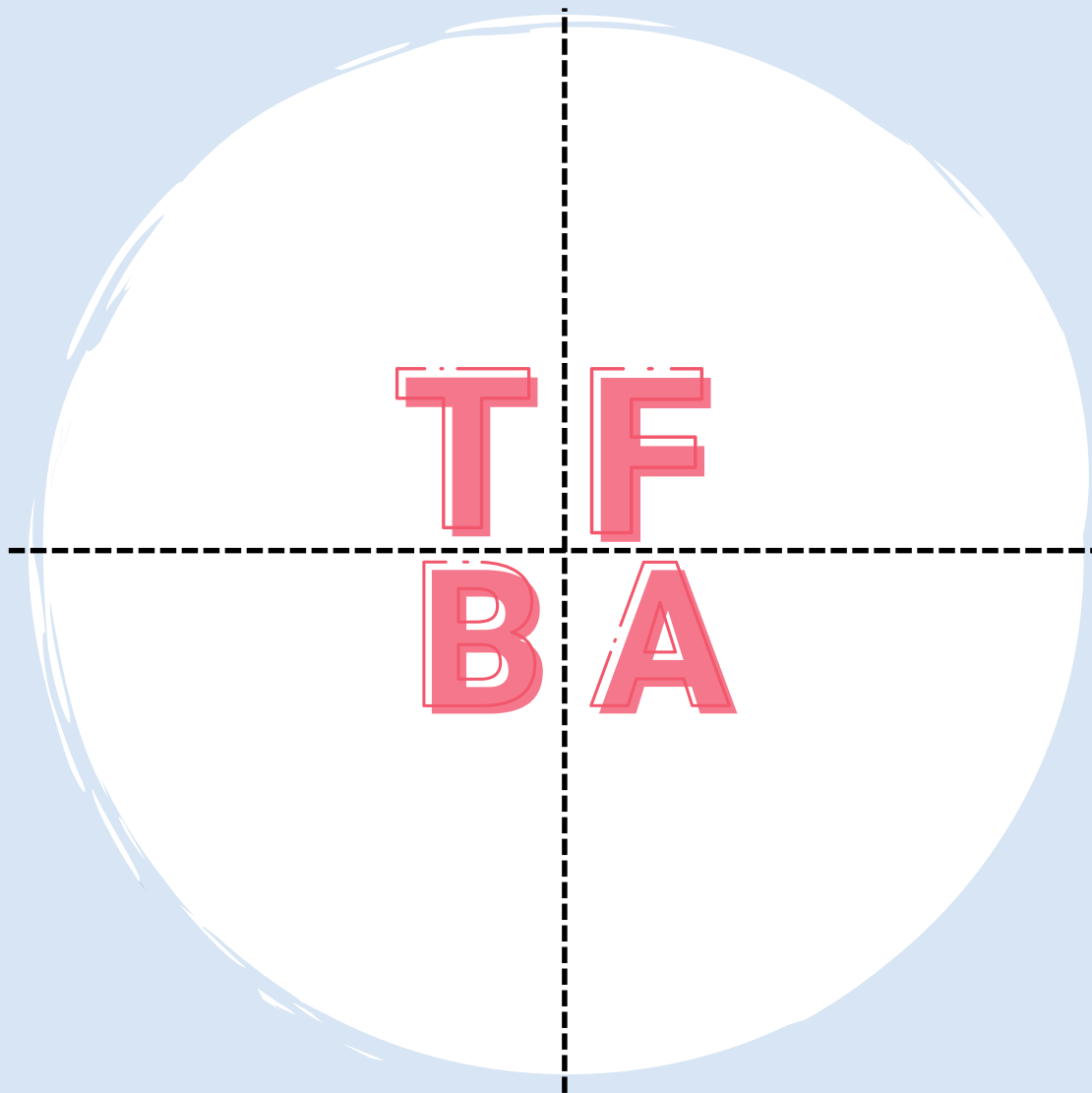
- Increased time spent on social media
- Excessive time watching TV just to fill time
- Feeling "numb" or hopeless and not knowing what to do
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When you are feeling worried or anxious, you might be able to notice some of the ways your body and brain responds. These responses are known as the **fight, flight and freeze** responses. Which response we have depends on the situation, and our individual brains.

Are any of the responses above familiar to you? Can you think of any more?

2. The “Hot Cross Bun”



This model is used to help us notice how our **thoughts, feelings, body responses** and **actions** are all linked. When we have a **thought (T)** it influences how we **feel (F)**, our physical reaction in our **body (B)** and then our **actions (A)**. If that first thought is one of fear or worry, it can affect that whole cycle. **Can you think of some of the negative thoughts you have often and try and fill in the "hot cross bun"? Now try changing that thought to a positive one. What do you notice?**



YOU ARE IN CONTROL!



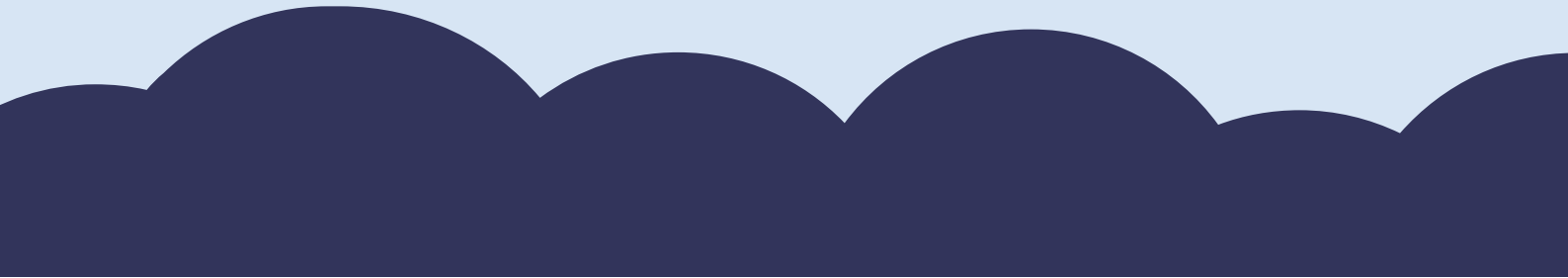
It's important that you know what **you** can do to support yourself, and what **others** can do to support you. Here's some ideas - but there's lots of space for you and others to add more.

What can I do to support myself:

- Learn about my brain and how to feel more in control of my feelings.
- Keep talking to others about my feelings and experiences.
- Reduce my time on social media, especially if I am seeing lots of disturbing images.
- Keep doing the activities that I find calming and enjoyable, like listening to music, doing sports, or doing something creative.
- Breathing activities and movements that help my body feel calm.
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What others can do to help me:

- Take time to understand my feelings and experiences.
- Listen to me and try and answer my questions.
- Keep making time and space for me to talk.
- Have fun with me and distract me with fun or relaxing activities.
- Learn about your brain at the same time as me!
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IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN DO TO HELP?

When we hear about very difficult events happening in communities other than our own, it can be hard to know what we can do to help. If you would like to support people directly involved in the conflict, you could consider some of the following ideas with adults at home or school.

1. Make sure you and your friends are being thoughtful about what you share on social media. Remember that something you find interesting might be really upsetting for someone else.
2. Keep being curious about the information being presented to you. Try not to share stories that you aren't sure are true. It's always best to fact-check with a trusted adult.
3. Remember that different people might have different perspectives about what is happening, but it is never acceptable to join in with unkind or unfair comments or behaviour towards others. Support others to be kind and inclusive of everyone in your home/school community.
4. There are lots of charities organising events to provide support to people in Israel and Palestine. You might be able to spend some time looking at local or national projects that are appropriate for you to get involved in, or even help to organise events in your own community.
5. You could share this resource with your friends and tell people about the links on the next page.



WHERE YOU CAN GO FOR EXTRA SUPPORT

Childline are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can talk to them about anything. Call them on 0800 1111

[Worries about the world | Childline](#)

[Worrying about Israel and Gaza | Childline](#)

[Advice if you're upset by the news - BBC Newsround](#)

[Toolbox | Childline](#)

