



English - Professional Brochure

# Welcoming populations exposed to war in Ukraine

Children & adults: Useful tips  
for frontline professionals

## Screening for immediate trauma reactions

### Within hours of shock

Intense emotional reactions are usual. The stress and fear experienced may cause distressing manifestations:



...which usually decrease with time and a return to a calm environment. These are normal reactions to an abnormal event

### In the following days and weeks

Experiencing war can cause difficult emotions, stress, and anxiety. It is not uncommon to experience:



- Certain situations **remind you of the event and promote stress or fear.**
- Wanting to **avoid everything that reminds you of the event.**
- **Feeling lost, disoriented by the circumstances.**
- **Loosing appetite.**
- **Feeling on guard**, startling at the slightest noise, having difficulty sleeping or nightmares.
- **Feeling sad, angry, irritable.**

## 8 practical tips for professionals

Although each person may experience the same event differently, **some tips can promote better recovery and avoid maintaining specific difficulties in adults and children.** Here are the most important ones:



#### 1. Ensure personal safety

When exposed to ongoing armed conflict, personal safety is the priority. Find a location away from danger whenever possible.



#### 2. Ensure physiological needs

It is common to lose appetite and forget to drink in the days following a difficult event. Offer drinks and snacks and encourage people to drink and eat regularly.



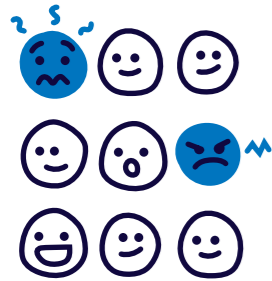
#### 3. Restore Humanity

Offer a warm and comforting welcome and lend an attentive ear to those who wish to express themselves. Listen in a non-directive way; some will want to talk about the events, others will not; this speech must remain free. Remember to take care of your emotional state. Keep some time for calm and rest (see point 8).



#### 4. Encourage sleep

Provide a resting place to recuperate and find an appropriate sleep-wake rhythm.



### 5. Identify people in distress and encourage appeasement

Some exposed people may have intense emotional reactions (anxiety, crying, despair), reactions of shock (apathy, mutism), or even unusual behavior (agitation, people on «automatic pilot»). Faced with these reactions, it is essential to remain calm and to listen. These attitudes can sometimes be enough to bring about appeasement.



### 6. Communicate information

Exposed people may have questions about the event or their loved ones. Allow them to get in touch with their relatives if necessary. Lastly, exposed people may be confused: it is then essential to give them material support (brochure) concerning the psychological reactions after a potentially traumatic event and the means of recourse.



### 7. Do not stay alone

Seek advice from other professionals with whom you work, and if necessary, contact mental health professionals or mental healthcare emergency services in your area (CUMP in France).



### 8. Take care of yourself

You are indirectly exposed to these events as professional receiving war victims—Foster solidarity with your colleagues and loved ones. Pay attention to your emotional state and listen to yourself, rest, maintain activities and relationships that matter to you. Maintain your safety and daily habits. Talk to a mental health professional if you feel the need.

## How do you talk to children about war?

**Stressful reactions are expected in a climate of fear and uncertainty related to war.** It is essential to differentiate between your child's reactions and your own experiences in this context.



1. Create a supportive environment where children can **ask questions** without forcing them to do so.
2. Suggest that children **share what they have heard, seen, or thought about the war with you or their parents.**
3. **Focus on factual information** and build on the protective aspects.
4. **Put the event in perspective:** *'war is essentially between soldiers', 'when there are armed conflicts, there are also individuals who act for peace.'*
5. **Protect children from overexposure to screens and media, and accompany them in choosing and deciphering information.**
6. Inform children of **the existing solidarity and mutual aid** and, if they wish, help them get involved (make a drawing, a donation).
7. Invite families to **engage in shared, enjoyable activities and restore reassuring rituals in the family's daily life.**

### How to relax ?

If you feel the need, for yourself or for the people you welcome, some mobile applications can help you find calm:

Meditation and relaxation: Meditopia, Headspace



Cardiac coherence: Respirelax



### Whom should I talk to?

Emergency mental health services may be organized differently depending on where you are. Contact local health professionals (Red Cross, Médecins du Monde, etc.) and ask for advice.

**In case of emergency, dial 112.**



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