Pray for UKRAINE

There's no question that all the news about Ukraine can be difficult to read and absorb.

How do we engage with this situation and protect our own mental health?

Introduction

The idea of this sort of conflict, where the rhetoric is quite intense is an unfamiliar one to many of us; and for some it could bring anxiety over what, if anything, might come next. If you are feeling overwhelmed or helpless, we have some simple suggestions that might help you.

Limit your news intake

Watching or reading the news can be a helpful way to stay informed, but it can also be quite addictive and increase our anxiety or fear. Maybe try only looking at the news once a day or even at a certain time of the day, for a limited duration, and then doing something relaxing afterwards. Make sure you stick to reliable, trusted news sources that don't engage into too many *what ifs'* or scaremongering.

Ask yourself if this is helpful to you

When a news story is developing, it can be tempting to read or watch what others (experts or not!) are saying; again, some of us may find this helpful in small doses. But that might leave you feeling anxious especially if people are sharing content you're trying to avoid or sharing concerning opinions. For example, you might come across speculation on potential fallout and how it might affect the rest of the world, including the UK. Social media allows anyone to share their views whether they are experts on a subject or not – and spending too much time on social media might also increase your anxiety. So, maybe try taking a break from the media and social media, or limiting how much you absorb. Make sure to regularly ask yourself "is this really helping me, or not?"

Understanding anxiety

Anxiety is a natural human response in certain situations. We often experience it when we feel we're under any sort of threat. Feeling anxious can be the 'right' way to feel and doesn't always mean you have a mental health problem. That said anxiety can still be a hard thing to sit through. For more information and advice maybe look at a website like Mind, the mental health charity (mind.org.uk/anxiety).

Talk to someone

It can be a huge relief to talk to someone you trust about how you're feeling and say your worries 'out loud' too. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can really help in itself. Your clergy are also available to help you to if you would like to speak to them.

Take Action

Taking action (however small or big) can be a great antidote to feelings of helpfulness when you're feeling distressed about a situation in the world. Having a walk; writing how you are feeling in a journal or on a piece of paper; reading a favourite book; spending time in the garden; having a conversation with a friend can all be helpful ways of doing something. So too could supporting a reputable charity that is doing something helpful in that situation.

Pray

How we might choose to pray is unique to each of us. The important thing is that we pray as best we can for this situation.

If you like words, please pray written prayers or suitable words from the Bible. If you like to sit in silence you might want to imagine, in your head, Jesus Christ reaching out to the Ukraine and note how you feel and use this as your prayer. If you like to do something, then pray as your iron or do a daily walk. If you like to be creative, maybe draw your pray. Or maybe you would like to pray with a friend on the phone for a few minutes.

Finally

Please reach out for support if you think it would help you.

Praying for Peace

Almighty God we pray for the situation on the border of Ukraine. We pray for those who live in fear, that you may grant them peace. We pray that the voices for discernment and peaceful solutions may prosper. Lord, we ask that you raise up peacemakers on all sides, that war and violence might be averted. Give diplomats wisdom, understanding and build trust. We ask for the church in the nations involved, may they be salt and light in a dark situation. Lord we lift this dangerous situation to you. May your kingdom come, Amen.

Loving God, we pray for the people of Ukraine, for all those suffering or afraid, that you will be close to them and protect them. We pray for world leaders, for compassion, strength and wisdom to guide their choices. We pray for the world that in this moment of crisis, we may reach out in solidarity to our brothers and sisters in need. May we walk in your ways so that peace and justice become a reality for the people of Ukraine and for all the world. Amen.

Collect for Peace

Almighty God, from whom all thoughts of truth and peace proceed: kindle, we pray, in the hearts of all, the true love of peace and guide with your pure and peaceable wisdom those who take counsel for the nations of the earth that in tranquillity your kingdom may go forward, till the earth is filled with the knowledge of your love; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen

Most information is lifted from Mind, *the mental health charity ensuring no one has to face a mental health problem alone – with some edits (www.mind.org.uk)*