

## **Significant World Events - Letter to Families from the Principal**

Dear parents and carers,

Your child may be aware of the distressing events that are currently occurring in Afghanistan.

Significant life threatening global, national and community events can have a significant negative impact on young people as well as adults, particularly during these already challenging times. Global warming, war, terrorism, bushfires, earthquakes, drought, pandemics, and other significant adverse community events now or the possibility of them happening in the future can threaten our sense of safety and control.

The extensive media exposure and reporting of these events and the repetition of the stories on the radio, television, in newspapers, online and informally through discussion with others can add to the adverse impact of these events. Widespread media exposure has led some students to worry about themselves, their families, and the future of the planet.

Young people often worry and know more than we realise. Adults may assume that young people are doing okay if they don't talk or ask questions about what has happened. Sometimes they have questions they may not ask unless we provide the opportunity.

Most young people will experience normal reactions to something that is distressing and with support from trusted adults around them these reactions will subside.

Remember sometimes teachers and parents feel like we don't have the answers. It is helpful to remind young people and ourselves that there are people working hard to make the current situation better.

### **Exposure to television, print media and social media:**

Many young people are likely to be unsettled by the images on television, in the print media and online media reports about the situation in Afghanistan.

It is important to understand what sense a child or young person makes of what they are seeing on television or hearing via the media (this includes social media) and what they are hearing in adult conversations.

It is important to monitor the amount of news coverage they see and hear. Seeing the scenes of violence and destruction over and over again can cause vicarious trauma to adults and young people.

Young people's emotional responses will vary in their nature and severity. Common emotions experienced by young people following a significant adverse event include fear, confusion, anger, loneliness, sadness, and anxiety.

### **Responding to the concerns of children and young people**

Children and young people may need to talk about what they have seen and heard. It is important that we listen to their concerns.

Keep information factual and dispel any rumours. Don't be afraid to tell them that you don't have all the answers.

Older students will possibly want to discuss the events, it is advisable to clarify information and dispel rumours as this helps them to process the information more accurately.

### **Advice for Parents and Carers**

It is wise for you to monitor your child's exposure to television coverage, print media and social media.

Some young people will want to talk about the tragic events and try to make sense of what they have both seen and heard.

Other young people will avoid any discussion around the events and will be reassured by routine and normality.

Remember the importance of routine, sleep, exercise, and healthy eating.

There is a range of things you can do to assist your child during events such as this, including:

- Acknowledge that the event was distressing
- Reassure young people that they are safe
- Look for signs of distress (e.g., some young people/young people might be scared)
- Normalise responses - typical response will range from anger to general upset or sadness
- Wherever possible maintain a normal routine - keeping the structure at home or at school in place Allow young people to express feelings as they arise
- Telling stories about how people manage during difficult times can be helpful.
- Separate fact from fiction e.g., young people may express fears about unrelated events.
- Speak in hopeful terms – young people and young people will often take their cues from their parents' reactions; if you are honest, calm, compassionate and open they will be much more able to trust that they will be okay.

We understand these are challenging times for some students and support is always available at Strathmore Secondary College. If your child requires support, please contact the college on 9379 7999 or email the school.

Kind regards,

Jillian English  
Principal