komodo

Navigating unsettled times
A guide for parents & caregivers

Recent regional developments may have increased feelings of uncertainty for some families. Even when daily life continues as normal, children are highly sensitive to changes in tone, conversation, and media exposure. They pick up on your emotions, the stress of others, and even small changes in routine, which can influence how safe and secure they feel.

You may notice your child asking more questions, seeking reassurance, showing irritability, or appearing more tired than usual. Some children may become clingier, while others may withdraw or seem unusually quiet. These reactions are normal and are simply their nervous system's way of responding to uncertainty.

When the nervous system senses potential danger or unpredictability, it shifts into protection mode. As adults, our role is not to solve what is happening in the world but to help children feel safe, supported, and understood. Providing stability, clear routines, and calm guidance helps children regulate their emotions and maintain their ability to learn, play, and engage socially.

What helps children feel secure:

Maintain routine:

Regular bedtimes, school attendance, family rituals, and shared meals all send strong messages that life is predictable and safe. Predictable routines give children a sense of control in times when the world may feel uncertain.

Keep explanations simple and age-appropriate:

Avoid graphic or detailed discussions that could heighten worry. It is okay to acknowledge that you do not have all the answers - honesty paired with reassurance is powerful.

Reinforce safety through words and presence:

Reassure your child with phrases such as:

- "You are safe."
- "Adults are monitoring the situation."
- "We have plans in place."

Limit repeated news exposure:

Continuous viewing or scrolling can reinforce feelings of fear and stress. Choose a couple of times each day for updates and keep explanations brief. Breaks from the screen for tactile activities such as crafting, cooking or gentle movement are a good way to create some space from heavy content.

Model calm regulation:
Children notice how adults respond to stress. Taking your own breaks, practising your own calming routines, and speaking in a steady tone will help children feel secure.

Encourage calming practices:
Simple tools like belly breathing, slow exhalations, or short movement breaks before bed or during the day can help children regulate stress hormones and restore a sense of calm. Practising these exercises together can also strengthen connection and model regulation.

Support emotional literacy:
Using an emotion wheel or simply inviting your child to name how they feel can help them understand and express their emotions. Naming emotions reduces their intensity and gives children a sense of control over their feelings.

Supporting yourself as a parent & caregiver:
Children take emotional cues from the adults around them. When parents and caregivers feel anxious, tired, or on edge, it can amplify their child's stress. Looking after yourself is not a luxury - it's part of keeping your child feeling safe.

Practical ways to support your own wellbeing include:

- Set boundaries with news and social media: Check updates at set times rather than constantly scrolling.
- Take brief movement breaks: Even a short walk, stretch, or a few deep belly breaths helps regulate your nervous system.
- Prioritise sleep and nutrition: Small routines like consistent bedtimes and regular meals stabilise energy and mood.
- Connect with trusted adults: Talk with friends, family, or colleagues about how you're feeling. Sharing your feelings helps release tension.
- Use a simple "sunset reset" at the end of the day: Pause, take a few slow breaths, reflect on one thing that went well, and consciously release one worry.

By taking care of yourself, you are modelling calm regulation for your child and strengthening the family's ability to cope with uncertainty. Even small steps matter, and your wellbeing directly supports your child's emotional safety.

Under stress, children's appetite, sleep and energy can shift - yet regular meals, consistent bedtimes, movement, and moments of connection are some of the most powerful regulation tools we have. Predictable rhythms signal safety to the brain. When the body is fuelled and rested, emotional responses are less intense, and recovery is quicker.

When the wider world feels uncertain, returning to basics creates stability. Food, sleep, movement and connection are not small things - they are the foundation that allows children to think clearly, cope effectively and feel secure. You don't need to change everything; simply protect the essentials.