

# Teachers notes

## Current Global Issues

### Introduction to topic (10 mins)

Worrying about global issues can contribute to anxiety and exhaust ill mental health. They are much bigger than us and can make us feel out of control. **SOURCE?**

In this session we are going to:

- Ask what global issues keep us up at night
- Discuss why they do this
- Talk through some coping mechanisms

### What global issues keep you up at night and why? (30 mins)

Question is posed to the class. Answers they might come up with include:

- **International terrorism**<sup>12</sup> (horrifying, rarely (but have) happened in our home countries i.e. not isolated to other parts of the world islamophobia, racism, globalisation + radicalisation)
- **Climate change**<sup>34</sup> (global warming, climate refugees, extreme weather, air quality)
- **Inequality**<sup>5</sup> (income inequality, civil unrest > Brexit/ Trump)
- **Poverty**<sup>6</sup> (3<sup>rd</sup> world developing countries, suffering, high death toll)
- **European economic crisis**<sup>78</sup> (unemployment, economic instability, Europe a declining world power, no room for refugees, racism)
- **Global conflicts**<sup>910</sup> (e.g. Syria, conflict refugees, high death toll, sending our army soldiers, western involvement in general, US vs.THEM, racism)

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<sup>1</sup> [WISERDEducation Survey](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Varkey Foundation US Based Survey

<sup>3</sup> [WISERDEducation Survey](#)

<sup>4</sup> [World Economic Forum](#)

<sup>5</sup> [World Economic Forum](#)

<sup>6</sup> [WISERDEducation Survey](#)

<sup>7</sup> [WISERDEducation Survey](#)

<sup>8</sup> European Barometer

<sup>9</sup> [World Economic Forum](#)

<sup>10</sup> European Barometer

## Coping methods: (15 mins)

### 1. Talk through the issue

Classroom has already practised the first coping method.

Talking about it helps; bust myths, rationalise, gain perspective, learn, releases tension, problem shared is a problem halved<sup>11</sup>.

### 2. Question the sources

First and foremost is to think about where we get our info on global issues from:

News, social media etc.

Now, as we're taught in all subjects, we should critique and questions our sources of info.

The news is inherently biased towards being 'newsworthy'. Therefore, the news you hear and see about topics such as climate change and terrorism etc. aims to have a shock factor, or gruesome curiosity (and in rare cases) an element of hope.

This could even give you what Dr. Steven Stosny, a therapist coined "headline stress disorder."<sup>12</sup>

So, important to remember/ put in perspective when coping with headline stress disorder is that you are probably not hearing ALL the facts, but instead the most extreme ones. Hence the overall picture you build about a certain topic, terrorism for example, will be exaggerated or skewed.

E.g. >> remember that the news only reports when there IS a terrorist attack. It doesn't report on all the days there isn't one. This will give you the impression that terrorist attacks are more prevalent than they actually are.<sup>13</sup>

Other coping methods for anxiety about the news include:

- Setting time limits spent digesting news
- Wait a while to consume news what it breaks – often takes time to get the facts straight, better quality more accurate news comes later
- Get good news too
- Pick up a paper – not Facebook, you'll get a better balance
- No news before bed
- Don't have to discuss the news all the time
- Get perspective

\*Go to [this web page](#) for full list.

## Coping with Anxiety about Terrorism (10 mins)

### 1. Understanding Terrorism

Gaining an understanding of terrorism, its purpose, can help you rationalise the fear of it.

Terrorism is an action or threat designed to influence the government **or intimidate the public**. Its purpose is to advance a political, religious or ideological cause. The current UK definition of terrorism is given in the [Terrorism Act 2006](#).

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<sup>11</sup> [Benefits of talking to someone](#)

<sup>12</sup> '[Headline stress disorder](#)': How to cope with the anxiety caused by the 24/7 news cycle

<sup>13</sup> BBC Paragraphs 1 – 5 [Young people anxious from terror coverage](#)

In the UK we define terrorism as a violent action that:

- Endangers a person's life, other than that of the person committing the action
- Involves serious violence against a person
- Causes serious damage to property
- Creates a serious risk to the public's health and safety
- Interferes with or seriously disrupts an electronic system<sup>14</sup>

The goal is to make you feel scared, like you are in imminent danger. Make you fearful of other people and divide communities.

## 2. Understanding our irrational fears about Terrorism

We tend to overestimate the risk of terrorism based on these irrational factors:

1. First, we tend to think that something is more risky if a very dramatic event recently happened. This is true after acts of terrorism or airplane accidents or the Ebola "crisis." The recency of an event leads to increased fear of the event reoccurring.
2. Second, we tend to overestimate risk if the event is dramatic—especially if we see pictures on the news 24 hours a day. We do not see pictures on the news of skin cancer, breast cancer, heart disease, car accidents, or the effects of [obesity](#) or [alcoholism](#). These illnesses are far more dangerous and kill far more people.
3. Third, we do not see "non-events" on the news. For example, we do not see people going about their normal business, arriving safely, going to stores, and doing things they always do. These "non-events," which constitute "reality," do not make the news. That's because these are events that are more likely. But that is how you should evaluate risk. How many people were *not attacked* in Europe or America? 600 million.
4. Fourth, we overestimate risk if the cause of the danger is invisible. So, for example, there's an increased estimate of risk because we believe we cannot see terrorists coming toward us, just as there was an increased estimate of risk about Ebola, which also seems to be an invisible threat.
5. Fifth, we overestimate risk if we perceive the perpetrators as malicious. So, we view terrorists as hating us and trying to kill us. But malicious intent does not affect the actual probabilities of dying from that event. Cancer and heart disease do not have malicious intentions, but they are far more lethal.
6. Sixth, we tend to overestimate risk when the risk appears uncertain. But we live with "accepted uncertainties" daily, including driving to work, eating in restaurants, crossing the street, and sitting next to someone who sneezes. The anxious mind equates uncertainty with danger. This is irrational.<sup>15</sup>

## 3. Rationalising the Threat of Terrorism

The rational response is to estimate the probability of being a victim of terrorism.

In fact:

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<sup>14</sup> [EducateAgainsttheHate](#)

<sup>15</sup> [How to think about Terrorism](#)

- Terror is killing far fewer people in the UK now than it was in the 1980s<sup>16</sup>
- 49 people have died because of terrorism in the UK between 2010 and 2017.<sup>17</sup>
- Based on the number of people killed in such attacks in the last few years, the chance of someone in the UK being killed as of 2017 is roughly one-in-2.2 million.<sup>18</sup>
- As a point of comparison, you are more likely to die from food poisoning, from falling off a ladder, getting out of bed, or stumbling down the stairs. In fact, in the UK, you are 275 times more likely to die in a traffic accident than you are to be killed in a terrorist attack.<sup>19</sup>
- There are less attacks in the West nowadays than at any point in modern history.

Between 1970-1990, armed nationalistic militias were far more commonplace. Groups such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Basque-based ETA all carried out frequent, violent attacks on civilians on a semi-regular basis.<sup>20</sup>

## Coping with Anxiety about Climate Change (10 Mins)

### 1. Understanding our fears about climate change

Feeling the threat of climate change involves a whole host of difficult emotions. Common feelings are fear, anger, guilt, shame, grief, loss, helplessness. These strong feelings might result from direct fears about climate related weather events affecting us, or vicarious distress about future threats, or about climate change impacts in other places, or even distress in response to the existential threats to civilisation as we know it.<sup>21</sup>

**'Eco Anxiety'**: a phenomenon whereby some people "are deeply affected by feelings of loss, helplessness and frustration due to their inability to feel like they are making a difference in stopping climate change."<sup>22</sup>

Being able to cope with the feelings we have about climate change is very important so that:

- we don't become overwhelmed by these feelings
- we don't try to avoid the problem in order to avoid the feelings
- we don't burn out
- we can keep functioning well in our everyday lives
- we can stay engaged with climate change and with the changes we are making to reduce the threat.

### 2. Coping mechanisms and conclusions (15 mins)

For more detail see this Coping with climate change distress [Info Sheet](#)

- Taking action

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<sup>16</sup> [How many people are killed by terrorist attacks in the UK?](#)

<sup>17</sup> [How many people are killed by terrorist attacks in the UK?](#)

<sup>18</sup> [How Simple Math Shows Us That Manchester-Style Terror Attacks Shouldn't Be Feared](#)

<sup>19</sup> [How Simple Math Shows Us That Manchester-Style Terror Attacks Shouldn't Be Feared](#)

<sup>20</sup> [How Simple Math Shows Us That Manchester-Style Terror Attacks Shouldn't Be Feared](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Coping with climate change distress](#)

<sup>22</sup> ['Eco-anxiety': how to spot it and what to do about it](#)

- Taking a healthy break (don't read news yada yada)
- Cultivate hope – there is still, scientists point out, a window of opportunity to reduce greenhouse gas – and we have the resources to do it.
- Recognise that other people will feel this way too. This is called “common humanity” and it is a way of countering the sense of isolation that can come with suffering.