



Reiss-Davis
Graduate School

Dean's Office

03/03/22

Dear Reiss-Davis Community:

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a large-scale invasion of Ukraine escalating the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian crisis to a war that reverberates far beyond the region. While we witness the strikes of Russian forces and the heroic efforts of Ukrainians to protect their nation, their democracy, and their freedom, we are confronted with countless images and reports of destruction, violence, suffering, and death.

As mental health professionals we are all too familiar with the traumatic impact and the pathways of vicarious traumatization. Many among us are worried about loved ones abroad. In a country of immigrants, we have family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, and clients who have escaped the atrocities of war, persecution, and terror and might be reliving their worst fears. So many of us are while others may be rattled by intense anxiety, confusion, worry, and helpless rage.

However, as we are all exposed to the unfolding of a profoundly traumatic event, we are easily taken over by our own defenses. Mental health professionals, therapists, educators, and supervisors are asked to open spaces to contain and process distress and despair, to provide relief and cure - yet we are simultaneously and equally affected. All too easily the wounded healer becomes a helpless helper too. Our only antidote might be our willingness to gather with others and to face and reflect upon our experiences with acceptance and love. This becomes even more important when we are professionally involved in the care of others, such as the most vulnerable and youngest among us. Therefore, be reminded to resource yourself on how to talk about trauma, loss, and war, especially with children, e.g., visit the *National Child Traumatic Stress Network*:

<https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/fact-sheet/talking-to-children-about-war.pdf>

As the Reiss-Davis community stands in solidarity with those who are confronted with violence and injustice, let us seek ways to recognize that we are all in this together, that we can come together, and that we can take action: Sign a petition, call your senator, donate to address the humanitarian and refugee crisis, volunteer, fund raise, reach out to others, attend a protest, stand in solidarity with those who raise their voice, meditate, and:

*"To take care of yourselves, you must take care of the helpless Beggar inside you.
You have to embrace him/her. You have to talk to him/her.
You have to do something that shows that you acknowledge his/her presence.
You must promise to give your all to heal and look after him/her."*

- Siraj Sirajuddin

With kind regards,

Jens U. Schmidt, PhD
Dean, Chief Academic Officer

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