

Don't Scare Kids with Political Fears

I remember the panic I felt about tornado warnings as a child. It didn't matter whether my family was in danger; I wasn't informed enough to know whether we were. I didn't understand that worry isn't helpful, and I wasn't able to change things. There was nothing meaningful I could do.

In the past couple of weeks, I've heard of local children scared that World War III had begun. They've overheard adults talking about it and were worried. I did my best to explain things and calm the fears of one kid; hopeful that she'd calm her friends.

It would be great if adults would stop acting like scared children; overreacting about politics, science, and other things they don't understand as well as they imagine they do.

This pattern repeats both locally and on a global scale.

In recent months an angry Swedish teen gained attention because she believes the planet is being destroyed by carbon dioxide. She's scared ... and she blames you.

All because she has been shown one side of a debate by people who don't want dissent. Their political agenda — their power and position — depends on the narrative going a particular way. She is being used as their political pawn.

I'm not even claiming she's necessarily wrong. Regardless of what you've been told, no one knows. Climate predictions about the long-term are not much better than a guess. But the way she has been frightened and used is wrong without question. Do you really want to ruin a young person's life based on speculation?

Political events may even be worse. To pretend you know for certain that one politician having another politician killed is going to cause a world war — and scaring children with this kind of talk — is irresponsible. Or worse.

If you want to worry, go ahead. But to scare kids with this kind of thing isn't right.

I'm not saying to keep them ignorant. You can discuss the facts without sharing scary doomsday conclusions.

It's different to educate a kid on the dangers of getting into a stranger's car. They have control over this. None of us can save or destroy the planet, and politicians are going to do what politicians do. In fact, you can't be certain which path results in destruction and which one comes out better in the long run. You can guess. You can apply your beliefs. But you can't know.

To scare children over things no one can know for certain is child abuse.