



Dear Community,

We are all deeply shaken and struggling to come to terms with the unimaginable news of the violent attacks in Israel. While we are all processing our own emotions, parents have the additional responsibility of helping their children process and cope with the distressing events. Below are some guidelines on how to address the war in Israel with your children as current events continue to unfold:

Prepare Yourself for the Conversation: As parents, it is important that we do our best to speak to our children from a place of calm. As difficult as it is at this time, children look to their parents for guidance and support. Before engaging with your children, take a few moments to regulate your emotions and gather your own thoughts.

Always use facts and encourage questions: It is important to acknowledge that this is difficult and painful for adults as well, and that we don't have all the answers. Talk to your children in a factual and age appropriate manner. It is essential that children hear facts from parents rather than using social media and other outside sources for their information. Closely monitor your child's use of social media during these times as explicit and graphic content can be traumatizing to children.

Validate your child's emotions: There are no "normal" reactions to abnormal situations. Validate whatever emotions your child is feeling and give them the opportunity to ask any questions they may have. Acknowledge that the unknown can be unsettling and anxiety-provoking. Additionally, remind your child that it is normal and okay to feel multiple emotions. Reassure your children that having fun with friends and enjoying school does not take away from any sadness or worry they may feel.

Model healthy coping strategies: Share with your child what your coping skills are and why they feel helpful to you (ex: "When I feel worried, I find it helpful to take a few deep breaths..."). While it is ok for them to see that it is difficult for you, it is also important that they see your strength and stability to maintain their sense of safety. Encouraging your child to do something meaningful related to the situation during this difficult time can be a helpful coping strategy and help them regain some level of control. Posting graphic videos is not a healthy coping strategy and can cause an increase in anxiety and trauma to others.

Reaching out for additional support: Check in with your child over the coming days as the situation develops to see how they are feeling. If your child experiences ongoing difficulties with sleep, changes in mood, changes in appetite, etc., consider reaching out for additional support.

The clinical staff at the Mozes and Helen Stern Upward Community Counseling Center is available for consultation. If you have any questions or concerns about your child or need guidance on how to speak to your child, please do not hesitate to reach out.

May Hashem send comfort and strength to all of Klal Yisroel during this incredibly challenging time.