



Dear Teachers,

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, teachers have the additional responsibility of helping their students cope with the distressing events. Some helpful guidelines for teachers include:

1. **Prepare yourself to go in and teach:** In times of crisis, teachers play an essential role in helping children cope. You provide a shield between them and the scary world around them. At the same time, we are struggling to cope on our own. It is crucial that you first take care of yourself and your own needs so that you can address your students from a place of calm. Before coming in to teach, take a few moments to regulate your emotions and gather your own thoughts. If you feel you are unable to do so, please reach out to the administration.
2. **Discussing the situation in Israel:** While it is important to acknowledge the situation in Israel, steer away from getting into specifics. It is okay to acknowledge and validate how difficult and overwhelming the situation is. At the same time, explain to your students that getting into the details of the situation in a classroom setting is not helpful. Each student is processing in their own way and it is important to respect that. Instead, focus on and encourage children to use this time to do acts of kindness, daven and unite together in the merit of helping Israel. It is extremely important that students understand that they are not being told to not talk about it at all. Explain that there is a time and a place and encourage students to discuss the details with a parent or a trusted adult.
3. **Identifying Red Flags:** If you see a child needs additional support, please direct them to the appropriate support staff. Before walking into the classroom, identify the support staff in your particular school. Some red flags include:
 - a. Noticeable changes in behavior
 - b. Increased anxiety or sadness
 - c. A clear need to process what's happening (i.e, can not stop talking about the horrific details or preoccupation with death)
 - d. A decline in academic performance
 - e. Physical symptoms such as increased headaches and or stomach aches.

4. **Maintaining Routines and Adjusting Expectations:** There are no “normal” reactions to abnormal situations. Recognize that each student will process differently. While some students may arrive largely unaffected, others may be severely struggling. In general, keeping regular routines is extremely important in maintaining stability and decreasing anxiety. At the same time, it is also important to have reasonable expectations in considering the student workload. This includes what is given in class and the amount of work that is sent home. Finding alternative ways to engage students (i.e. additional movement, art, or writing time) may better help students cope in class.

As educators, we play a pivotal role in shaping the perspectives and understanding of our students. By following the guidelines provided, we can create safe spaces for our students to express their emotions and ask questions.

Let us remember that even in the face of darkness, teachers have the ability to provide understanding and hope. Together, we can inspire resilience and empathy in our students, helping them navigate through these challenging times.