

# SUPPORTING PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN AT THIS TIME

## tips and tools for teachers and parents

### CALM AND CONSISTENT

Mirror calm and stability – children will take their lead from you. We can help children who might feel unsettled by making school feel as 'normal' and safe as possible.

Routine, structure and consistency help children to feel safe and secure. Change as few things as possible as little as possible.

Reassure children that the adults will take care of them and that they have always had security measures in place to look after them.

For older children, think together about how they can be responsible for modeling safe, calm behaviour – e.g. on the walk to school, during fire drills etc.

### FINDING THE BALANCE

Whilst we want to be responsive to children's feelings, it is also important to model positive and helpful ways we can think about the situation:

Talk about hope, peace, and the situation coming to an end.

As the American Children's TV host, Mr Rogers famously said, 'Look for the helpers'. Focus attention on all the people who are helping, caring, doing their best to make a difference. Encourage children to smile/say thank you to the security guards or police they might see at school, and raise money/help for support organisations.

Try to create an environment whereby we acknowledge difficulties feelings whilst remaining hopeful and building positivity. We can still have joy in our homes and classrooms.

### SUPPORTING YOURSELF

We all respond to situations differently and, like the children, will have different experiences depending on our own circumstances. Sometimes our reactions can take us by surprise or our anxieties can be triggered unexpectedly.

Support yourself – What do you need to do to be OK?

Breathing exercises, mindfulness exercises, physical activity can all help us feel more grounded and present.

Give yourself the time and space to manage your own worries.

Do you need to talk to someone about how you feel? Identify someone you feel comfortable to talk to.

### CONNECTING

Our most powerful tool for wellbeing is connection. When something difficult happens, we need to build our connections with each other and offer children a sense of togetherness and belonging.

Give children opportunities to play together and build empathy.

Remind the children about how we all look out for each other. We can notice if our friend is sad or not feeling like playing or just isn't themselves.

Remember that all the children will have different points of reference and some will have been more exposed to information than others.

Children will respond in different ways and at different times. Create opportunities for open-ended communication. For young children, this will be mainly through play and expressive arts. Older children may want to chat, ask questions and express themselves in different ways.

Remember talking helps us understand what's going on and make sense of it. Remind the children that they can talk to you.

### RESPONDING

Allow for open play and self-expression – young children process through play. This is a good time to notice how children are doing and think about how we can respond.

Acknowledge feelings, be responsive and notice what's going on – Has anything changed in their behaviour? Are they more needy, more easily upset, reactive or hypervigilant? Notice if children want to talk or share and think about how to help children feel calm and safe.

You don't have to have all the answers – it's ok to say 'I don't know' or 'I will come back to you'.

It's okay to say –

"We are all feeling sad about what has happened"

"We can support each other – we can listen to each other – we can share with each other – we can help each other"

Be mindful of responding to what we see and hear rather than being pre-emptive and offering 'sessions' at this time.

### ACTIONS

Doing something can be empowering and gives children some sense of agency.

- Give tzedakah
- Contact communities in Israel – letters and cards
- Get involved with collections of needed supplies

**we come together - we connect - we talk -  
we share - we look out for each other**



in  
collaboration  
with

