

# **How can we support children and young people in the UK to cope with the situation in Israel?**

---

DR. TALYA GREENE  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY



# Normal responses to extreme events

---

**We are not in Israel. But we are all connected. We are all affected.**

**Younger children may:**

- Have difficulty sleeping
- Feel sad, scared, angry
- Regress in their behaviours
- Be more clingy
- Act out
- Complain that their tummy or head hurts

**Older children and teenagers may:**

- Have difficulty sleeping
- Feel sad, scared, angry, worried, overwhelmed, guilty
- Feelings of isolation or loneliness ('other people don't understand what I'm going through')
- Have difficulty concentrating, difficulty with schoolwork.
- Avoid social interactions.
- Have headaches, tummy aches, other pains
- Feel tired and unmotivated
- Have changes in appetite
- Find it hard to share their feelings

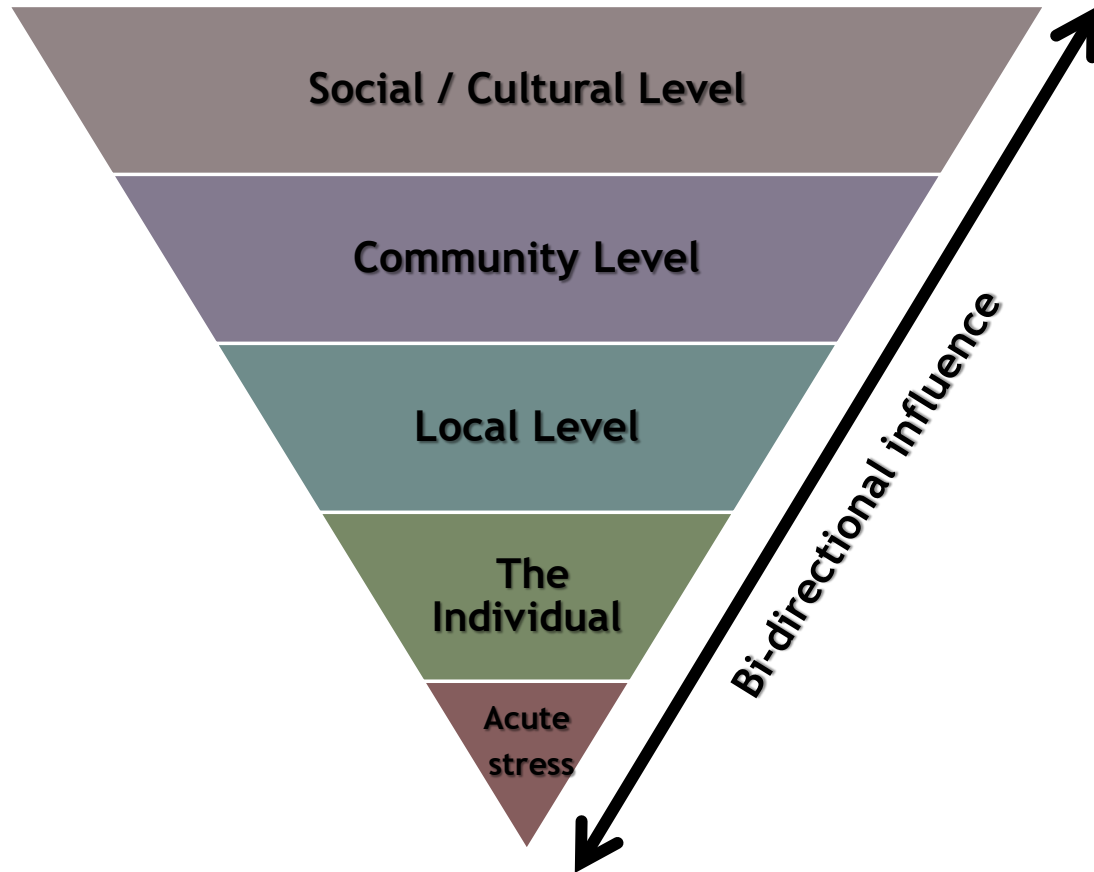
**We may experience these feelings too**

- You may feel like sometimes you are coping, and sometimes you are not. Over time you may feel like you are 'running on empty'.

**These are extreme and distressing events. It is normal for you and your children to have emotional and physical responses**

# 'Inside Out' and 'Outside In'

---



## **Inside out**

Managing internal symptoms

## **Outside in**

Facilitating external supports

# Sense of safety

---

## **Help children to understand the ways in which these events do and don't impact on them**

- Disentangle threats (personal/people they know in Israel/Israel in general, physical vs psychological)
- Remind them that they are here, in the UK, with you.
- Talk about the things that the schools/CST/police are doing (and regularly do) to help us to stay safe
- Acknowledge and validate their worries, anxiety, and sadness about the situation and about people they know

## **Maintain daily routines. Familiar places and activities help them to feel safe and normal**

- Think about things that can help them to feel some sense of control - e.g., plan/cook dinner, choose a game to play.

## **Physical comfort and reassurance**

- Give hugs (younger and older kids). Be physically close.
- Allow children to 'regress'. Be more dependent, get into your beds.

## **Manage their exposure to the media**

- Explain your concerns honestly
- Limit or block social media – especially apps with videos that open automatically. Try and do this collaboratively
- Get them to show you their social media feeds so that you can understand what they are seeing
- Guide older children to reliable sources of news.
- Try and watch with them if you can and follow up to check what they understood and how they are feeling.

# Talking about the situation

---

## **Give brief, simple, direct and honest information and let their questions lead the way**

- Answer the question they actually asked – don't give unnecessary information they didn't request
- Avoid euphemistic language.

## **Different conversations for different ages/stages**

- Be aware that older children can access the information independently – you can help them to process their reactions.

## **Don't give false reassurance or pretend that this didn't happen**

- We want to 'protect' but can end up making them feel less secure or filling in the gaps

## **Use prompts to encourage communication**

- 'I noticed that you heard us talking about what was happening in Israel. I wanted to know if you had any questions?'
- 'Even for adults, this kind of situation can also be confusing and scary. Is there anything you want to talk about?'
- 'Were they talking about the situation in Israel today at school? How are you feeling about what is going on in Israel?'
- 'Even if you don't have questions now, I want you to know that you can always ask when you do have questions.'

## **You don't need to have all the answers**

- It is ok to say that we don't know what will happen. It is also OK to say that it won't always be like this.

## **Talk about the things that people are doing to take help with the situation**

- e.g., soldiers are helping to protect people, people are raising money, people are hosting families that have had to leave their homes.
- 'Even Rishi Sunak spoke in a shul and told everyone he is supporting this fight'.

## **Be prepared to have multiple conversations – not all the information needs to be shared in one go**

# Calming and emotional regulation

---

## **Your own response will impact your child's response.**

- It can be helpful to discuss your own reactions with family or friends before talking it through with children.

## **Be aware that parenting in these situations can feel uncomfortable and strange**

- Younger children might not get it
- Dissonance – manage your own response

## **Notice, seek and highlight positive moments**

- Don't feel guilty about having a nice time with your kids.
- Also reassure them it is ok to have good times and do things they enjoy.
- Finding light in dark moments is important.

## **Encourage them to spend time with friends**

- Reassure them that they won't be the only ones finding this hard.

## **Model the management of strong and difficult emotions**

- This doesn't mean pretending we are ok
- Show them that we manage fear by talking and sharing our feelings with others, and spending time with people that we love.
- 'It helps me when I'm sad to spend time together with you doing nice things'

## **Help them take breaks/switch off**

- Engage them in active tasks, preferably with you or others (e.g., sport, baking, art, puzzles, games, walks)
- Encourage them to do the things that usually make them feel good or less stressed (e.g., clubs, TV, spending time with family, youth movements).

# Be kind and compassionate to yourselves and others

---

## **Be kind to yourselves**

- Manage your self-care.
- Take breaks from the news and social media.
- Do things that make you feel good. Active tasks that can distract you are especially good.
- Spend time with people you love.
- Get some fresh air.
- Engage in physical activities.
- Avoid unhealthy coping strategies (e.g., alcohol, risky behaviours).
- Ask for help if you need it.

## **Be kind to each other**

- Connectedness.
- Check in with friends and family - those that live in Israel and those that don't.
- Most people in our community will have some kind of connection to Israel.
- Some more, some less connected, but everyone affected in some way.
- Encourage compassion

## **Find ways to help**

- Donate money.
- Send letters to people in Israel.
- Support Israelis to who are stranded in the UK
- Find ways to help your children help others.

# You aren't alone in this

---

Remember we have friends, family, and community

Remember we also have support from the people outside of our community

Access other support if needed:

- Your usual lines of support - your school, your shul, your GP
- JTeen – text messaging support for teenagers **07860 058 823**
- Jewish listening line – helpline for adults **0800 652 9249**
- Childline – helpline for children and teenagers **0800 1111**
- PAJES





# How can we help our children when they are feeling anxious?

Dr Hannah Abrahams

Educational Psychologist

# What can be done to help?

- Notice your needs- Put on your oxygen mask
- Predictability – Maintain a routine and a sense of purpose
- Connectedness and Conversation; Validate Fears and Worries
- Calming and Mindful Enjoyable Activities In Micromoments
- Creative Engagement; What’s in yours and your child’s toolbox
- Name the helpers and the heroes; they are always there
- Allow your child to see your feelings. Talk and reflect upon them; be mindful of boundaries
- *Name Feelings in order to Tame Them*
- Help to clarify the facts; use appropriate language and visual aids
- Answer questions truthfully if it is too much for you, ask another adult to do so

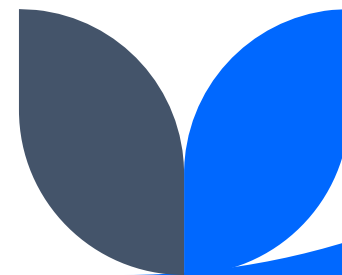


# Social Media and News Scrolling for Tweens and Teens

- Looking at the news can provide an illusion of control; if we are “up to date,” we are doing something BUT instead we weaken and tire ourselves out.
- Guilt- a feeling that not connecting will mean we care less. This is untrue. It can often be related to survivors guilt.
- The Need for self-preservation and protection
- Tell the children that the videos and testimonies are bigger and crueler than our souls can contain – junk food for the mind.

# Anxiety Reducing Activities

- Visualisations
- Body Scans and Scaling Activities
- Time to Move
- Zones of Regulation
- Allowing time for decompression;
- Social Stories
- Anger is the TIP of the iceberg; be curious with your child
- FACT Glasses



# The antidotes to your and your child's anxiety can be;

- Your words
- Your presence
- Your self awareness
- Your reflective nature
- Recognition of Resilience
- Honesty
- Your ability to know when to take a break
- Boundaries and containment
- Your sense of knowing
- You're good enough

