



OCTOBER 7, 2023

IS ISRAEL'S 9/11

**GUIDE AND RESOURCES FOR
EDUCATORS IN THE UNITED STATES**



Resources for Schools

Perspective

On Oct. 7, 2023, our Jewish people entered the deadliest time we have ever experienced since the Holocaust. Our school-aged students are confused, which may manifest in regressive behaviors including clinging to caregivers, nightmares and experiencing stress and anxiety. "Studies have shown that consumers of a war via television, social media, or other forms of media can be just as impacted as the actual individuals within the conflict...It [9/11] the first televised disaster. [Studies found](#) that those who watched the event on television were just as likely, if not more, to develop trauma-like symptoms than those who lived in New York City at the time," Jewish and Israeli children need the time and space to grieve.

Our Jewish and Israeli American children need emotional support during these times. They are witnessing the aftermath of a massacre of unseen proportions. Families have been ripped apart, and our children see their mothers, fathers, siblings, and friends deal with the loss. Some of our families have also lost loved ones during the initial terrorist attack. The loss of the family places considerable stress on children, especially since the biggest mediating factor in how they cope is a solid family relationship, say psychologists.

Dr. Mike Wessells, a psychology professor from Randolph- Macon College, shares that when parents are emotionally affected by war, that alters their ability to care for their children properly. They watch as we check our phones for updates, and call one another for news about abductions, deaths, and the status of our injured. We are hurting. Our kids are hurting. Despite our efforts to shield them, our world is in turmoil, and they see things, they hear things, they know that things will never be the same.

We at the IAC want to help you understand the depth of our despair. It is imperative that your staff make efforts to provide our children with the space they need to process what is happening within their homes, their families and in their nation of origin. Your Israeli American and Jewish students are not OK. The research suggests that you listen to children during such times. If a student asks for a break, space, or requests to speak to his/her/their caregiver please allow them to do so. We have had numerous reports of students becoming emotional in class. Due to the volatile nature of the events in question, the triggers are everywhere. Please be aware and keep an eye on your Israeli American and

Jewish students especially now. In addition, we ask that you also protect the children from having to listen to justification, excuses or politicization of the horrors that have transpired in Israel. This is not the time for “but” or “if”. This is not the time to take sides. The only sides here are terrorists versus civilians. Death and destruction intentionally inflicted on innocents is wrong.

The rise in acts of antisemitism across the country at elementary schools, middle and high schools is staggering. We ask that your Israeli American and Jewish students' physical safety is top priority. We understand that freedom of speech is the right of every student and staff member, but please keep in mind that when such speech has historically and now emphatically escalated to acts of violence against children and young adults, we must be vigilant. The safety of every child is your priority. One student’s freedom of expression should not take precedent over another student’s safety, ever. Every parent deserves to know that their child will be coming home safely from school. **Resources: Videos to understand the situation better:**

[President Biden’s Statement about Hamas](#)

[Why Is 10/7 like 9/11 for Israel and Israeli Americans](#)

[Hamas Israel War](#)

[Geography Now! Israel](#)

Picture Says a Thousand Words



What you might observe in Elementary School students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others (more clingy with teacher or parent)
- Worry about recurrence of violence

- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Changes in behavior:
 - Increase in activity level
 - Decreased attention and/or concentration
 - Withdrawal from others or activities
 - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
 - Absenteeism
- Distrust of others, affecting how children interact with both adults and peers
- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, overreaction to minor bumps and bruises)
- Changes in school performance
- Recreating the event (e.g., repeatedly talking about, “playing” out, or drawing the event)
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Statements and questions about death and dying
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

Mental health counseling that has been demonstrated to be effective in helping children deal with traumatic stress reactions typically includes the following elements:

- Education about the impact of trauma
- Helping children and caregivers re-establish a sense of safety
- Techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions

- An opportunity to talk about and make sense of the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment
- Involvement, when possible, of primary caregivers in the healing process

What you might observe in Middle School students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:
 - Decreased attention and/or concentration
 - Increase in activity level
 - Change in academic performance
 - Irritability with friends, teachers, events
 - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
 - Withdrawal from others or activities
 - Absenteeism
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, chest pains)
- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Repeated discussion of event and focus on specific details of what happened
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)



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- Education about the impact of trauma
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- Techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions
- An opportunity to talk about and make sense of the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment
- Involvement, when possible, of primary caregivers in the healing process

What you might observe in High School students

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:

Withdrawal from others or activities

Irritability with friends, teachers, events

Angry outbursts and/or aggression

Change in academic performance

Decreased attention and/or concentration

Increase in activity level

Absenteeism

Increase in impulsivity, risk-taking behavior

- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Increased risk for substance abuse
- Discussion of events and reviewing of details
- Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others

- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (including suicidal thoughts, writing, art, or notebook covers about violent or morbid topics, internet searches)
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

Mental health counseling that has been demonstrated to be effective in helping adolescents deal with traumatic stress reactions typically includes the following elements:

- Education about the impact of trauma
- Helping adolescents and caregivers re-establish a sense of safety
- Techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions
- An opportunity to talk about and make sense of the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment
- Involvement, when possible, of primary caregivers in the healing process

Create a supportive school environment

1. Maintain normal school routines as much as possible.

A child with traumatic grief can feel that life is chaotic and out of his or her control. It's beneficial for the child to have a predictable class schedule and format. The child may also need extra reassurance and explanation if there is a change. Staff should look for to help classmates who are struggling with how best to help and understand a student with traumatic grief.

2. Raise the awareness of school staff and personnel.

Teachers and school staff may misinterpret changes in children’s behaviors and school performance when they are experiencing childhood traumatic grief. Although it is always a priority to protect and respect a child’s privacy, whenever possible it may be helpful to work with school staff who have contact with the child to make sure they know that the child has suffered a loss and may be experiencing difficulties or changes in school performance as a result. In this way, the school staff can work together to ensure that children get the support and understanding they need.

3. Modify teaching strategies

Balance normal school expectations with flexibility. You might avoid or postpone large tests or projects that require extensive energy and concentration for a while following the death. Be sensitive when the student is experiencing difficult times—for example, on the anniversary of a death—so that you can be supportive and perhaps rearrange or modify class assignments or work. Use teaching strategies that promote concentration, retention, and recall and that increase a sense of predictability, control, and performance.

4. Support families

Build a relationship of trust with the student’s family. On a personal level, be reliable, friendly, consistently caring, and predictable in your actions. Keep your word, and never betray the family’s trust. It can be helpful for the school or district to designate a liaison who can coordinate the relationship among teachers, the principal, the guidance counselor, other appropriate school personnel, the family, and the child.

5. Make referrals

Consider referral to a mental health professional. Traumatic grief can be very difficult to resolve, and professional help is often needed. If possible, the student and him or her family should be referred to a professional who has considerable experience in working with children and adolescents and with the issues of grief and trauma.

Resources

[The Mental Health Effects of War: Backed by Science](#)

[Smith, D. \(2001, Sept.\), 32\(8\). American Psychological Association; Children in the heat of war.](#)

<https://news.columbia.edu/news/how-did-911-impact-mental-health-children-new-york-city>

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED490449.pdf>

Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2008,

www.NCTSN.org

<https://edition.cnn.com/2023/10/07/middleeast/israel-gaza-fighting-amas-attack-music-festival-intl-hnk/index.html>

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/09/middleeast/israel-amas-music-festival-aftermath-intl-hnk/index.html>

https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-amas-war-gaza-10-10-23/h_900dd199725e8173174f5275f41121c1

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<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-10/ty-article/.premium/so-the-world-knows-what-happened-the-scene-of-slaughter-at-kibbutz-kfar-azza/0000018b-1aa1-df31-a99f-7fe3eae50000>

<https://x.com/cnni/status/1711733154904490239?s=20>

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https://abcnews.go.com/International/horrors-emerge-amas-infiltration-israel-gaza-border/story?id=103856865&cid=social_twitter_abcn

<https://twitter.com/CBSNews/status/1711738352204935511>

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