How we can support children and young people in the UK in response to antisemitic attacks. May 2026

ADAPTED FROM

"HOW CAN WE SUPPORT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK TO COPE WITH THE SITUATION IN ISRAEL?"

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Normal responses to extreme events

We are all connected. We are all affected.

Younger children may:

- Be very worried or anxious
- Be confused about what is actually happening
- 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 worried, sad, scared, angry, overwhelmed, confused
- Feelings of isolation or loneliness ('other people don't understand what I/we are going through'; 'everyone hates us')
- 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
- Find it difficult to stop engaging with social media relating to the situation

We may experience these feelings too.

It is important to remember that these are extreme and distressing events, and we have been living with ongoing uncertainty for a long time now.

It is therefore normal and valid for you and your children to have emotional and physical responses. You may feel like sometimes you are coping, and sometimes you are not. Over time you may feel like you are 'running on empty'.

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/places they go).
- Some of their thoughts and feelings will be about things that happened already, and some will be about things that they worry might happen.
- Remind them that you are here for them and remind them of all of the trusted adults they can talk to if they are worried or upset.
- Talk about the things that the schools, shuls, CST, government, police, etc., 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.
- Remember to do things that they enjoy – spending time with people they love, going out to places they like, spending time outside being active.
- For older children, it may help reassure them if you create a plan with them about what they should do if they found themselves in difficult situations facing antisemitism. Run through different scenarios.

Physical comfort and reassurance

- Give hugs (younger and older kids). Be physically close.
- Allow children to 'regress'. Be more dependent (e.g., need more help settling at bedtime, want an adult to walk them into the school gates).

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, and talk through with them what this all means
- Remind them that the algorithms are designed to draw you in, and make you have a response (e.g., make you angry, make you emotional).
- Remind them that not everyone thinks and behaves the same way, even if that is how it seems from social media
- 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 these events aren't happening

- 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 the recent antisemitic attacks. I wanted to know if you had any questions?'
- 'Even for adults, this kind of situation can also be confusing and make us worry. Is there anything you want to talk about?'
- 'Were they talking about it today at school? How are you feeling about what happened?'
- '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, and that things are always changing.

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

- e.g., police are helping to protect people, people are raising money, lots of people who aren't Jewish have offered their support
- 'Even the Prime Minister is going to shuls and meeting with us, and he has told everyone he is supporting the Jewish community'.

Remember to talk about being Jewish in a positive way

- We are proud of our identity and who we are
- We are very lucky as a community – we look out for each other and support each other.
- 'We can go to shul and see all our friends every week', 'It is so fun that every week we get to have Friday night together and have a special meal'

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.
- Most people in our community will have some kind of connection to someone who has been directly affected. Everyone will be affected in some way.
- Encourage compassion
- Understand that everyone responds in different ways

Find ways to help

- Prayer, spiritual space
- Find ways to help your children help others.
- Talk about our values of looking out for others, being kind, helping those in need.

You aren’t alone in this

Remember we have friends, family, and community

We are going through this together

We know how to look after each other and come together in times of need

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 – wellbeing@pajes.org.uk