

PROJECT CHAI

Chizuk, Healing And Intervention



BELLOWS NATIONAL CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM

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Our boys have been found, murdered.

As each of us in the Jewish world reels with shock, pain, sorrow, disbelief and anger, our own children, students, campers are undergoing their own intense upheaval in trying to face the tragic news which we have feared, not wanting to consider as an outcome to the kidnappings.

It is very important as parents, as teachers, as adults in a guiding and mentoring role with our youths, to face them at this painful time. We can offer words and support which can help catalyze the difference between eventual coping and perspective, versus the alternative of feeling betrayed, terrified and traumatized for weeks to come.

In speaking with young people, it is important to have them share what they have heard already. Rumors abound, as does misinformation which adds to a child's confusion and anxiety. As adults, we listen then clarify at a level the child or youth can fathom as to what has occurred. If we are ourselves unclear about details, we should acknowledge that and agree to obtaining accurate answers as possible.

It is normal for children and youth to react at different levels, much as we adults do - troubling thoughts and images, difficult feelings, conflicting emotions, withdrawal and anger - spiritual turmoil - and as adults, tune in to your child, helping identify and validate their reaction. Do not correct or reprimand them for feeling, or not feeling a particular way. Offer them a normalizing statement while also observing that with time that they may be having different reactions than in the moment. Offer reassurance, within reason, that they are not in danger and that we continue to hope and trust that they and others will still be safe.

Listen to their feelings. Although this is a horrible, horrible time in their lives and in the lives of the Jewish nation, most of your children are in the midst of the "ripple" which means that they are reacting to a trauma where they are not the first-level victim or survivor. This means that their reaction is one of crisis but with most, will not lead to a severe or enduring traumatization or disorder. Your task is to be with them, show support, encourage them to open up with you or with a trusted mature role model such as a rebbe, teacher or similar person known to them. You may find that, particularly with older children, your compassionate caring silence while sitting with them is encouraging and calming. Do not grope for words when none are forthcoming or none are appropriate in the moment. Avoid making pledges, promises or reassurances which you cannot act on or implement. Discourage your children and youth likewise from making sudden decisions or lifestyle changes i.e. fasting, avoiding familiar routines, ceasing to meet with friends or

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other deprivation, and instead encourage them to talk things over and utilize the passage of time while gaining and forming a perspective.

Address, at an age appropriate level, their religious or spiritual struggles. Tefilla and tehillim remain valuable and indispensable resources for addressing our internal struggle, even for young people. Feeling confused about the Heavenly hashgacha is also a normal part of being a spiritual person, and if you can discuss this with them, do so. If you do not feel equipped, invite them to look into their questions with a person whom they, and you, look up to.

Finally, at the level of physical health, they need to eat, sleep and adhere to their personal needs. This is not a time for anyone to forego their natural survival requirements, for to do so will increase fatigue, anxiety and even depression. Whereas wild or silly activity as a "diversion" is neither helpful or healthy during this time of bitter shock, calming activities particularly for younger children - art work, constructive crafts, reading soothing stories, should be considered as a balm for their inner turmoil and as a tool for redirecting the intense competing emotions which may need an outlet.

We believe that HaTzur tamim Poalo - all that HaShem does, is flawless and faultless, directed towards the eventuality of perfecting His world and bringing about the geula sheleima.

Please contact us at crisis@chailifeline.org or 855.3.CRISIS and our skilled professional staff will be prepared to guide you and respond.

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