

MADRAIGOS

RESPONDING TO THE EFFECTS OF OPERATION SWORDS OF IRON

a guide for parents
& teachers



Madraigos, a 501c-3 not-for-profit organization, offers a wide array of innovative services and programs geared towards helping teens and young adults overcome life's everyday challenges one step at a time. Our goal is to provide all of our members with the necessary tools and skills to empower them to live a healthy and productive lifestyle and become the leaders of tomorrow.

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RESPONDING TO THE EFFECTS OF OPERATION SWORDS OF IRON



Introduction:

As parents, we must recognize that the conflict, which often dominates the news and conversations, can create a sense of fear, uncertainty, and distress in our children.

Our children may witness distressing images and stories from the conflict through various media sources, making it challenging for them to process the often graphic and traumatic content. These experiences can lead to feelings of anxiety, fear, and a sense of helplessness.

Additionally, although the conflict is happening in Gaza we are witnessing anti-Semitic sentiments and actions elsewhere in the world. Our children might encounter instances of prejudice or discrimination, whether in school or online. It's crucial for us to equip them with the knowledge and tools to address these situations and maintain a strong sense of identity and pride in their Jewish heritage.

The conflict's impact isn't limited to the emotional realm; it also has educational implications. School-age children may struggle with their studies as their minds are preoccupied with global events, causing their academic progress to suffer. This is a critical time for learning and personal development, and disruptions can have lasting consequences.

CHILDREN'S (INFANT -5) REACTION TO OPERATION SWORDS OF IRON



Children's reaction to disaster by age Infant through 5 years old

Babies and infants do not have the full capability to describe events or feelings to others; however, they are able to retain memories of those events which may then be expressed as they grow older. Their reaction to disaster may include being more irritable, crying more than usual, or wanting to be held and cuddled more often.

Preschool and kindergarten-age children often feel helpless and powerless in the face of an overwhelming event. As a result, they may feel intense fear and insecurity when separated from their parents or caregivers. Try not to leave them alone, but if you do have to, let them know where you are going and when you will return. Also of importance, is paying attention to their play; look out to see if they are re-enacting a stress or concern, repeatedly.

For more reactions to look out for, see pages 6-7



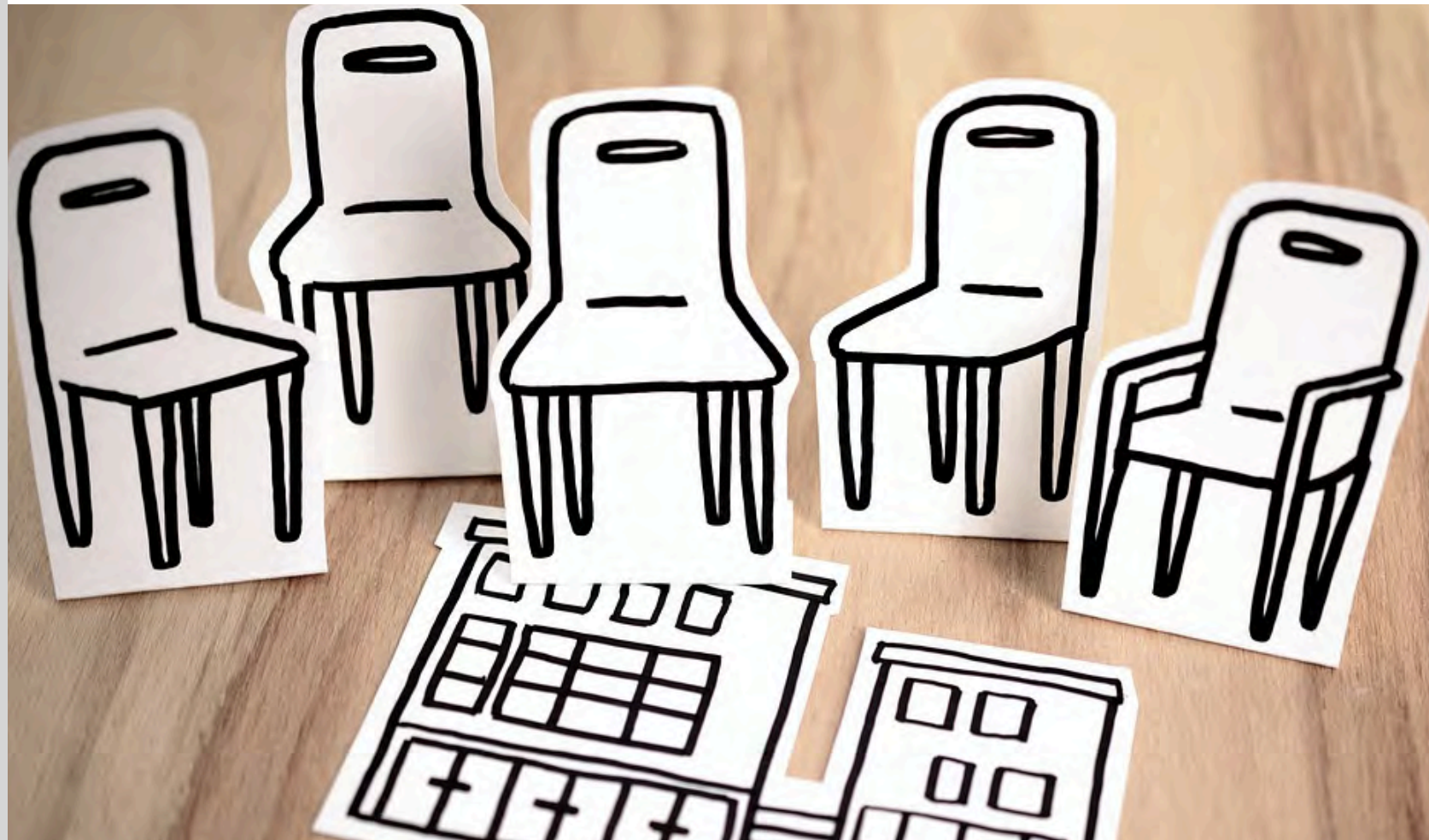
CHILDREN'S (6-12) REACTION TO OPERATION SWORDS OF IRON



Children's reaction to disaster by age 6-12 years old (School-age)

School-age children have the ability to understand what is happening around them. Some children may become intensely preoccupied with the details of the stressful event and want to talk about it continually. This preoccupation can interfere with their concentration and may affect their social awareness and academic performance. Some behaviors to look out for are sadness, generalized fear, or specific fears of stress happening again. Other possible behaviors are feelings of guilt over action or inaction, anger that the event was not prevented, or blame directed at others (inc. caregivers) who may have contributed to the stress.

For more reactions to look out for, see pages 6-7



CHILDREN'S (13-18) REACTION TO OPERATION SWORDS OF IRON



Children's reaction to disaster by age 13-18 years old (adolescence)

As children grow older, they develop a more sophisticated understanding of the disaster event. Their responses are more similar to adults. Much of adolescence is focused on moving out into the world. After a trauma, their view of the world can seem more dangerous and unsafe. Teenagers may become involved in dangerous, risk-taking behaviors, such as reckless driving, or alcohol or drug use. Others can become fearful of leaving home and avoid previous levels of activities. A teenager may feel overwhelmed by intense emotions and yet, feel unable to discuss them with others.

For more reactions to look out for, see pages 6-7



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



Signs & Symptoms

Emotional:

- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Feeling detached or unconcerned about others
- Feeling jumpy and getting startled easily
- Feeling on-guard and constantly alert
- Feeling nervous, helpless, fearful, or sad
- Feeling numb; and not able to feel love or joy
- Feeling rejected or abandoned

Physical:

- Stomach upset and trouble eating
- Trouble sleeping and feeling very tired
- Pounding heart, rapid breathing or sweating



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS CONT.



Signs & Symptoms cont.

Physical (cont.):

- Getting severe headaches
- Having disturbing dreams and memories or flashbacks
- Having trouble concentrating or making decisions

Behavioral:

- Being irritable or having outbursts of anger
- Becoming easily upset or agitated
- Blaming or having a negative views of oneself
- Distrust of others
- Getting into conflicts, being over-controlling
- Having social or academic problems
- Failure to engage in regular health care
- Smoking, alcohol, drugs and excessive food consumption



RISK FACTORS



Risk Factors

- **Prior mental health issues**

This includes children with a prior mental health disorder as well as those who have had prior exposure to disaster or other traumatic events

- **Direct exposure to the disaster**

This includes being evacuated, sequestered, exposed to the protests, and or violence themselves

- **Personal loss**

This includes the death or capture of a family member or close friend

- **On-going stress from the secondary effects of disaster**

This includes constantly hearing about what is happening, watching graphic images or videos, parental anxiety, and exposure to negative media information.



FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



It is important to understand what is causing your child's anxieties and fears. These are the top three fears children will have during the swords of Iron campaign:

- **It will not end, and if it does, it still won't be safe**
- **Someone close will die or get severely injured**
- **The local rhetoric against Jews will get worse**

You can clarify misunderstandings of risk and danger by acknowledging children's concerns and perceptions. Listen to what they are saying. If a young child asks questions about the event, answer them simply without the elaboration needed for an older child or adult. Children vary in the amount of information they need and can use. If a child has difficulty expressing his or her thoughts and feelings, then allowing him or her to draw a picture or tell a story of what they are thinking may help.

THINGS PARENTS & CAREGIVERS CAN DO



Things you can do for your children

- Encourage your children to talk and listen to their concerns.
- Calmly provide factual information about the disaster.
- Limit exposure to the media as it may cause more fear, anxiety and confusion. (Be especially careful when allowing younger children to see images.)
- Involve your children in the planning for the family's ongoing safety by giving them specific tasks to let them know they can help.
- Spend extra time with your children but also give them their own space.
- Establish daily routines for school work, play, meals, and rest.

THINGS PARENTS & CAREGIVERS CAN DO FOR THEMSELVES



Things you can do for yourself

Parents and caregivers can best help their children when they understand their own feelings and have developed ways of coping themselves. When parents and caregivers or other family members are able to deal with the situation calmly and confidently, they are often the best source of support for their children.

Ways to care for yourselves are maintaining a healthy diet and having an exercise regimen. Finding time for recreation and self time are also of utmost importance. Try to set aside some time to talk to friends and family and be open to sharing your struggles, thoughts, and feelings with someone you trust.

Bolstering our Bitochon and Emunah in HKBH allows us to navigate through these times of uncertainty. Another powerful medium to channel our fears and anxieties is Tefillah. Davening and saying Tehillim provides an opportunity to care and support ourselves and others through these difficult times.

FOLLOW UP FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS



Follow up and emotional health resources

If your child continues to be very upset or if their behavior interferes with their relationships at home or with friends, it may be appropriate to get some help. The following are a number of programs specifically setup by Madraigos for these time:

- Individualized Family Support
- Therapeutic Referrals for Trauma/Anxiety Specialists
- Parent Guidance on How to Address Emotional Effects at Home
- Youth Emotional Health First Aid for Parents and Educators
- Creative Self Expression and Self Regulation at Girls Ignite
- Therapeutic Discussion Groups at the Guys Lounge

For more information call

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