



Dear Parents,

We live in challenging and heart wrenching times. During the next few days, more of the hostages will be returned to Israel- Some are no longer alive. These are painful days for all of us, and it is important for us as educators to stand with and support the families of the hostages during these difficult days and months ahead.

The hostages who are no longer among the living- their names, their pictures and discussion about them – has taken center stage in the media, public discourse and of course among many of our children. Many children may be exposed to this difficult information and it can easily preoccupy them.

It is important to address the topic in an age appropriate manner- while relating to each individual child's developmental level and personal connection or relation to the issues at hand. It is highly advisable to limit exposure to news coverage and distressing and heart breaking images as much as possible.

Teachers, guidance counsellors and school administrators are prepared for the possibility that the topic may arise in conversation with students . They have received guidance and tools to conduct appropriate discussions - taking into account the differences among students, their families and their communities .

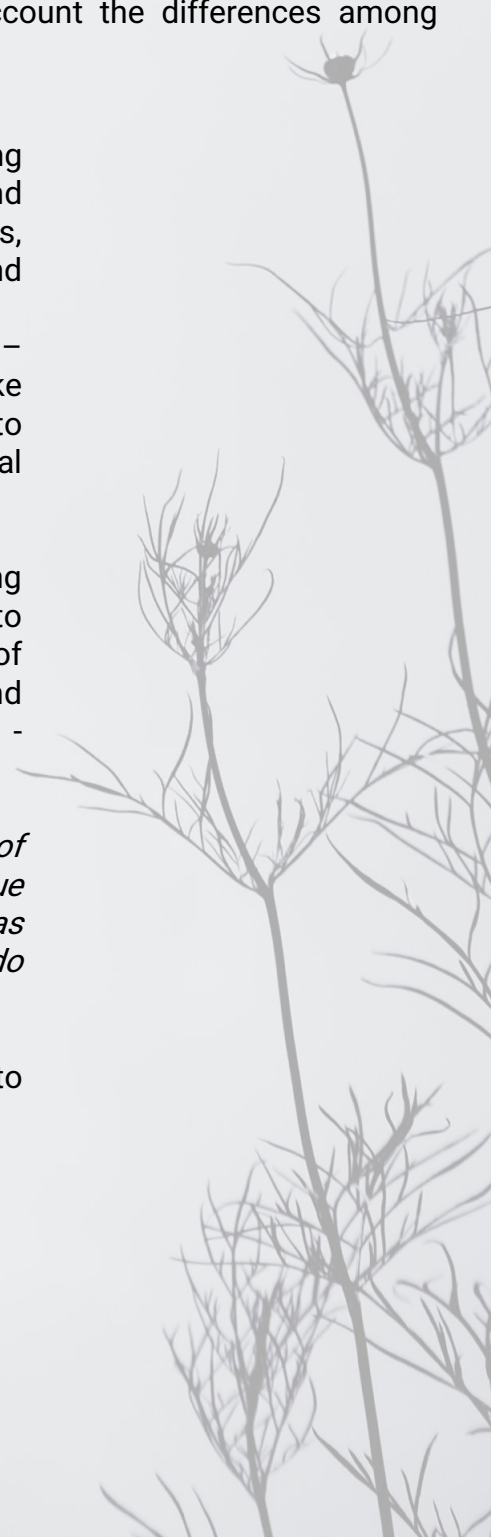
The recommendations are to avoid initiating discussions regarding these hostages in preschools and elementary schools. However, where the topic arises, educators will guide the conversation in a professional and appropriate manner.

IN addition, in communities with strong ties to the families – or who experience trauma, loss and grief- discussion will take place under the guidance of professional who are there to support the members of the community and the educational institutions.

Classroom discussion and conversation will be guided using principles of emotional dialogue – providing a safe space to students to share while offering support and the message of hope and resilience- while fostering connections and understanding. All emotions will be validated and accepted - concern, anger, fear – of the present and the future.

*Please be attentive to your children, their expressions of concern and their feelings. It is important to continue conversation that may have begun in class. You may ask- Was there any discussion in class regarding the hostages? How do you feel? Would you like to ask me?*

We recognize how difficult this discussion is. We would like to offer the following that may be of help:





### **“I’m here for you – we can talk about anything.”**

Speak in a way that is appropriate for your child’s age. Encourage them to ask questions and answer as clearly and honestly as possible. There is no need to share distressing or difficult details, nor to provide information that is not age-appropriate.

### **“There are people protecting us.”**

A message of security and protection: Adults in Israel—including families, security forces, civilians, and professionals—are constantly working to strengthen the safety and security of everyone.

### **“It’s okay to feel...”**

Acknowledging emotions: It is natural to feel fear, stress, confusion, tension, or worry, alongside feelings of joy, anticipation, and hope for what is to come.

### **“The hostages who returned today died in captivity; they are no longer alive.”**

Only if children themselves bring up the fact that the hostages died in captivity, it is possible to explain that they were heroes, that their families are deeply saddened, and that we are also sad. It is important to emphasize that, despite the sorrow and pain of this tragic news, bringing their loved ones back to Israel is significant for the families, as it allows them to give them a proper burial.

### **There is hope – we believe things will get better.”**

Many people in Israel are doing everything they can to bring all the hostages home. We all hope that those still in captivity will return soon, safe and well.

### **Dear Parents,**

In difficult times like these, you serve as a steadfast and unwavering pillar of support for your children, now more than ever. We stand with you as you navigate these challenges and want to offer our support.

You are not alone. Remember, as always, the school staff—your child’s teacher, counselor, school psychologist, and administration—are here for you. If needed, you can also reach out to the Ministry of Education’s support hotline, *Kol Le’Kulam*, at \*6312.

We pray for the swift and safe return of all the hostages to their homes, healthy and whole, and for the safe return of all IDF soldiers and security forces.

