

The Heroes of October 7th Intended for Educators

As parents and educators, we have a strong desire to protect our children and students. We don't want to believe that they know the meaning of the words terrorist, kidnapped, killed or bullets.

Our children have already heard about cruel deaths: most of them know what Pharaoh did to Jewish babies in Egypt. They also know what Haman planned in the Purim story, and some of them have also heard about the Holocaust.

But all this happened sometime during our vast history and does not threaten us now. The horrors of the current war are still occurring, and we are doing everything we can in order for the children not to know about it.

It is worth saying here: they know. They already know. If not from home or from their teacher in class - they have heard from friends. And if not from a reliable source, then from the Internet.

With Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of the Wars of Israel and the Victims of Acts of Terrorism) upon us, the events and stories of this war will also be broadcast. This year is more complex and more difficult for all of us. How do we maintain a balance between shielding our students, and the important task of bridging reality - these days of heroism and bravery that surround us - in a way that is appropriate?

Let us be the ones to direct them and tell this story, in a way that will illuminate the heroism, that they will strive to live like those heroes. So their cruel and painful deaths will not be in vain.

The stories and activities contained within the 'War of Heroes' project were prepared by a professional team of educators and professionals, and they have some advice:

- Maintain proportionality: there is no need for excessive, detailed descriptions of the events. Do not direct your students to dig for further details and at the same time, do not try to ignore or skim over the difficulty of what happened.
- It's not only the written text of the story that's important, but the accompanying conversation around it - in the classroom and at home with their parents (a guide for parents is attached) "What do you think about the story? What are you feeling now?". Validate the students' experience and guide the parents. "It's really a sad/worrying story".
- Assert a reassuring, comforting context: "We're so lucky the army is now in control", "We're in a safe, protected place".
- Be a role model: share your own feelings about the story: "I'm really saddened by this story, and I also think there is something we can learn from it".
- Recommendation: show the students the map of the Land of Israel, explain where the war broke out.
- Eye contact: try to maintain eye contact with each and every one of the students when you choose to tell a story as well as when you direct and explain the story to them and how to work at home on stories of heroism.

Most importantly, only you know your students. Exercise your own judgment throughout.

B'hatzlacha,
The 'War of Heroes' Project