TALKING TO KIDS ABOUT ISRAEL

Below are some suggested tips for parents and educators from Leanne Matlow*. As the conflict is dynamic, so must be our responses.

1. **Take care of yourself and your own mental health first.**
   (Take media breaks, go for a walk, stick to a routine with proper eating and sleeping.) It is okay to ask for help from colleagues, or friends when you need a break.

2. **Remember your kids/students are always watching and listening to you and how you react.**
   Be mindful of the emotional impact of your words and actions.

3. **Set boundaries on the news consumption in your house, especially around your kids.**
   This is an opportunity to talk about critical thinking and bias in the world of social media.

4. **Are your children/students hungry or tired?**
   Very simple, but before you speak to your children about anything difficult, check on their physical needs first. It will not be helpful to have a potentially stressful discussion unless everyone is calm before you begin.

5. **Understand your child’s/student’s level of knowledge and comprehension.**
   Take cues from your child and let them lead. Ask open-ended questions. “Please share with me what you’ve heard and how are you feeling about it?” Avoid jumping in with a lecture or giving more information that they are unaware of or are not asking for.

6. **Reassure your child/student that they are safe here.**
   Clarify where the conflict is happening. If you don’t know the answer to a question, it is okay to say that you will get the information and answer them later.

7. **It’s okay to be lenient and reassuring, but don’t set a precedent that is not sustainable.**

8. **Take what your children/students are worried about and turn it into action-oriented tasks.** Brainstorm practical ideas about what you can do to feel hopeful and helpful.

9. **Ensure that your child/student has access to talk to you and that you are there to listen empathetically.** Set a time for this discussion which should NOT be as children are getting into bed.

*Leanne Matlow is a cognitive behavioral therapy counselor with a private practice specializing in child and adolescent anxiety.*