

Presenting question:

Do we have resources, tips, advice, guidance, strategies to share with colleagues about speaking with students during these trying times? Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools is gathering resources that schools can share with their faculty in order to guide conversations with the students about the “why?” Why bomb threats? Why anti-Semitism? Why does this keep on happening?

Elementary School

1. Perhaps a response to the “why” is the reaction people often have to that which is different from themselves. Many students are studying about Purim now. Looking at Haman’s description of the Jews as a people who act differently (follow different laws, etc.) is a jumping off point for the discussion of what our reaction should be in the face of differences (physical ability, gender, color, religion...). Role-playing a different response by Achashverosh could lead toward a better understanding of how our responses today might shape the society in which we live. ([Chaim Galfand](#) - Perelman Jewish Day School)
2. In a community where our מצבות (grave markers—see Braysheet 35:9 et seq) were knocked down, we connected it to how we might react. Do we stand and do nothing like the נציב מלח (pillar of salt) that Lot’s wife becomes? Do we become like those who are נצבים (standing) before Hashem with specific responsibility? In short, we stand up when others are knocked down. ([Chaim Galfand](#) - Perelman Jewish Day School)
3. Why? Because there are people in the world that hate and discriminate, and there have been for a long time. But there are many more that step in and join their voices against that which seeks to tear us down. We used several liturgical pieces with which students are familiar.
 - a. The consecutive brachot of the Amida dealing with מלשינים/אויבים and צדיקים and drawing a connection between a משען (support, like the chair back that holds you up when you need it) and the notion that we’ve got to have each other’s backs, no matter what community is being targeted.
 - b. The section in ברכות השחר that asks Hashem to help us when we find ourselves in the midst of people that are bad, be they strangers or those we might otherwise count as friends (והרחיקנו מאדם רע ומחבר רע)—and leading to a discussion of how we are shaped by surrounding influences.

We temporally overlapped a Philadelphia cemetery desecration and Philadelphia school bomb threat with Rosh Chodesh and Psalm 104's closing (sung!) refrain that יתמו חטאים מן הארץ and the story of Bruria admonishing her husband Rabbi

Meir for praying for the death of hoodlums in his neighborhood: "Let sins be uprooted from the earth, and the wicked will be no more" (Psalm 104:35). It doesn't say, "Let the sinners be uprooted," Bruria corrected him. It says, "Let the sins be uprooted." You shouldn't pray that these criminals will die; you should pray that they should repent. And then "the wicked will be no more." Bruria, no doubt, understood that the likelihood of these individuals changing was slim, but our response—especially in the format of prayer—should be to rehabilitate rather than to destroy; it should be a response of hope (so that we choose to act) and not a response of resignation (that leads us to accept whatever comes). ([Chaim Galfand](#) - Perelman Jewish Day School)

For ALL Grade Levels:

[Shira Heller](#)

Article by Dr. David Pelcovitz

[*Coping with Loss and Terror: Jewish and Psychological Perspectives*](#)

Lots of very practical take-aways combined with depth in Jewish and psychological sources.

Resources routinely shared with Jewish schools ([Avi Baran Munro](#) - Community Day School in Pittsburgh):

- [How to talk with your children about anti-Semitism](#)
- [Common Sense Media: Explaining the News to Our Kids](#)
- [National Association of Schools Psychologists: Helping Children Cope in Unsettling Times; Tips for Parents and Children](#)
- [PBS: Talking with Kids about News - Strategies for Talking and Listening](#)
- [Jewish Education Center of Cleveland: Responding to Crisis](#)