

SAFE
ZONE

PARENTING CHILDREN IN WARTIME: TIPS AND TOOLS TO SURVIVE AIR RAIDS, SIRENS AND SAFE ROOMS



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1. Create Safety.

Know that you have it within you to help guide your child during these stressful times. **You can create safety**, even when the world outside isn't safe. Also know that you are not always going to get it right and that's okay. You are under unimaginable stress. You can hold both of these truths at the same time.

3. Co-regulate.



Co-regulation is regulating with your child, rather than expecting your child to regulate by themselves. Managing your own heart rate, slowing your voice, getting down to your child's level to soothe, holding your child tightly, and breathing deeply together, are all effective ways to co-regulate during these times.

2. Label and validate your child's feelings.

Have a mantra at the ready to use when your child expresses anxiety or fear. "This is hard, but it will help us stay safe," "Of course you're feeling that way," "That makes sense," "It's totally normal you're feeling this way," "We know what to do to keep us safe" are all examples of prepared, automatic statements to reassure your children when under stress.

4. Stock the safe room.



Prepare the safe room with familiar items that create distraction and calm despite the inherent danger associated with the room. Keep special snacks that are only used in the safe room. Bring in games that are designated for use during these times. Leave sensory toys in the miklat/ma'mad that will help children regulate including stress balls, bubbles that will facilitate breathing and soft, plush comforting toys. Fuzzy blankets and pillows are also good objects to keep there.





5. Seek out connection for yourself and your children:

Increase positive time and attention towards your children. Get down on the floor and play with them, or spend the forced time at home baking or organizing together. If that is too hard to fit in while working and home-schooling, aim to give each child 5 minutes of one-on-one time daily as a platform for them to feel safe sharing with you.

Increase physical affection. Touch can be nurturing and profoundly healing. Hug, kiss and snuggle more than you normally might and especially during the frightening moments.

- If possible, have play dates with your children's friends so they can share in the experience with peers and recognize that 'we are all in this together.'
- Have your child call or video-chat with family in other cities or countries. Have them recount (draw, write, or video) their experiences and share them with family.
- Connect to Hashem. Talk about Hashem protecting us and keeping us safe. Talk to Hashem in the presence of your children. Share stories of the miracles happening on the battlefield. Keep Tehillim inside the safe room and say or sing it together as a family.
- Connect to the nation of Israel. Share what people are doing around the world to help the Jewish people. Tell them stories about the tefillin being sponsored, the supplies being gathered, the Tehillim being said, & the incredible outpouring of support from Jews around the world.



6. Shelters

For shelters outside of your apartment:
Practice being in the room in a positive way (e.g., play a game or read a book there) when there isn't a siren to acclimate your child to the environment and associate it with something that isn't scary.

For children that want to go into the safe room every time they hear a loud noise or siren, even when it is not necessary: Show them on a map which neighborhood the siren is meant for. Describe to them in miles or blocks (depending on age) how far away the sound is from your home. If they are still not calm, agree to go into the safe room for a pre-set time, such as 5 minutes, and then you will come out together. Use that time to regulate your child through touch, grounding and breathing.



7. Trust in your child's resilience.

They will be affected by living through wartime, but they need not be damaged by it. Know that by being present (not perfect), loving and encouraging them, you are giving them the tools they need to get through this difficult time.



**For additional resources
or to request free crisis
counseling, please
contact
trauma@ohelfamily.org**