



# Talking With Our Learners About Israel and Gaza Through the Lens of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, And Belonging (DEI+B)

This document is designed to help educators with the following:

1. Affirm marginalized identities of our learners within the larger Jewish population through conversation around what is happening in Israel and Gaza;
2. Help foster cultures of belonging in this time of crisis.

**Please remember that as you speak with your learners, you may have your own feelings and thoughts. Two things are true at once:**

1. Your thoughts and feelings are valid, whatever they are;
2. Our learners are looking to us, as educators, parents, and caregivers, for support. Let us process what we need to while still holding space for our learners.

**NOTE: The language of child/children/students will be represented in this document as “learner(s).”**

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## BELONGING

From your classrooms to your living spaces, you may encounter various differing viewpoints. It is important to give space to our learners and help them understand that they may hold differing viewpoints from one another. Here are some tangible tools you can use when navigating through potentially difficult discussions:

- [For the Sake of Argument](#) has many resources for navigating through differing viewpoints. Click the link above to explore some of them.
- If you are in a classroom, refer to your *brit kehillah* (code of conduct) to ensure that everyone, young learner and educator alike, are following the previously agreed upon class norms. If you have not made one, do so before engaging in conversation.

- Check the temperature. Use words, or [an image of one to color in](#), to check in with your learners about how they are feeling.
  - Use the R.E.S.T. acronym to return to emotional stasis:
    - **Relax:** Take a breath, pause, step away, count to 10, do whatever you do to help yourself calm down. Sometime saying “Stop” or “Relax” aloud can help this. Also, if you already have a self-soothing skill such as deep breathing, this might be an appropriate time to implement it.
    - **Evaluate:** Now that you’ve calmed down a bit, look more closely at yourself and at the situation that caused the distress. What happened? How do you feel? Is there anything else going on?
    - **Set an intention:** Come up with a plan to address the situation. You could think of the appropriate response to someone or recognize that you need a longer break before going back to studying. This could also be more long term, such as learning better communication styles or a new study technique.
    - **Action:** When you feel prepared, start your plan.
  - Any of the above tools may also be used when adults are conversing with each other.
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## JEWS WITH DISABILITIES

- Some of our learners may be at various levels of verbiage, from slightly below grade level to being nonverbal. If your learners have a challenging time forming words and/or sentences, try using simple pictures to both share information (e.g., a drawing of a group of people holding one another to represent community), as well as to help students identify how they are feeling (e.g., happy/sad faces). These learners may not be able to cognitively and/or emotionally comprehend the gravity of the situation but are still deserving of expressing their truths.
- We know that it is helpful to have our learners stay in their routines as much as possible during times of crisis. For some of our learners who struggle with sudden change (such as those with autism and anxiety disorders), a routine is one helpful strategy for success. It may be helpful to find moments in the day to check in with your learners and remind them that they are safe, even when things are up in the air.
- There is a lot of written information coming in at a rapid pace. Some learners may be dyslexic or have difficulty reading and rely on you or their peers to read it to them. Perhaps create a verbal recording of a brief summary of what is going on, as well as make yourself available (as you can) to be in dialogue with these learners.
- [Read this social story by Keshet Chicago School with your learners.](#)

- [Read this list of eight tips created by Jewish Disability Inclusion News.](#)
  - [Look at this resource for talking about Israel with Children with Cognitive Disabilities.](#)
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## SOCIO-ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND DIVERSITY

- Our learners rely on trusted adults for knowledge and support. However, some of their parents/caregivers may not be able to afford the time to speak in depth about the war due to work or other necessary obligations. If so, [truvie.org](#), the family learning platform of The Jewish Education Project, has ready-to-go resources on how to speak with your learners without having to do the planning.
  - Some families are supporting those who are hurting by sending physical and monetary resources. We know that not every family is able to show support in this way. If your learner wants to support Israel and her people without spending money, try writing letters using [The Jewish Education Project's letter writing campaign.](#)
  - Some learners have never been to Israel, and do not have any loved ones there, while other learners might have many friends and family affected. It is important to give all learners space to voice their truths.
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## JEWS IN INTERFAITH RELATIONSHIPS / PEOPLE WHO CONVERT TO JUDAISM

- Some families may have loved ones who are in Gaza; who are Palestinian; who are Arab; and/or who are Muslim. When we speak with our learners about the importance of protecting the Jewish State of Israel, we should also be cognizant of the multiplicities of identities that may exist within our inner circles and within Israel. Specify with your learners that there is space to both support the state of Israel and hold compassion for all innocent lives (both Israeli and Palestinian).
- Some households may have two parents/caregivers in a multifaith relationship, including Jewish/Muslim. When speaking with our learners about what is happening in Israel and Gaza, it is important not to speak about a nationality at large, but rather identify a specific group of people (Hamas) who do not represent the entire Palestinian community.
- In times of tragedy, it can be easy to disengage or look away if one does not have direct ties to what is happening. Some learners may have family members (immediate or extended) or loved

ones who are not Jewish and/or may not understand what is going on the way they do. If so, take some time as the adult/caregiver to speak with your learner and/or the family about the importance of what is going on, and craft ways to hold space with and for one another.

- [Watch Brene Brown's video on empathy for a great thought process into holding space with someone.](#)
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## JEWES OF COLOR / ANTIRACIST WORK

- There are individuals and organizations that embrace and actively engage in antiracist work while simultaneously affirming Israel's right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state, such as [The Anti-Defamation League](#).
- Working against colonialism is an important piece of antiracism work. There are people who use the language of “colonialism” without considering nuance, context, and the complexity of the term, which may create challenging conversations. [Please click here for some resources to navigate through difficult dialogue.](#)
- We encourage you to look at organizations that center Jews of Color for more information on how to navigate through this work:
  - [B'chol Lashon](#) (Jewish cultural diversity)
  - [Jewtina y Co](#) (Latino/a/x and Asian intersectionality)
  - [The Lunar Collective](#) (Jewish and Asian intersectionality)
  - [Jimena](#) (Sephardic and Mizrahi Judaism)