

From Rabbi Rebecca Rosenthal, Director of Youth and Family Education at Central Synagogue

Teens: Give them the facts, as much as you can, but more importantly, help them to find sources of news that they can trust, and teach them to ask questions about everything they see, especially on social media but in traditional media as well (true about Israel, but also always true). There are some horrible images and videos out there, so make sure you are on top of what your kids are seeing and monitor their mental health around what they are seeing and hearing. Remind your kids that you can help them process what they are seeing, and ask them to tell you or another trusted adult if they see or hear things that are difficult or that they don't understand. Teens don't always want to communicate, but this is a moment to keep checking in.

Middle and Elementary School: Your kids likely know what is going on or they will hear about it in school or online. It is better if you are the one to tell them, so that you can give them a foundation for what they are hearing around them. Answer questions honestly, but don't give more details than they need. Do not let them scroll social media unattended. There are a lot of terrible images and videos out there, and your kids will need context and support for what they are seeing. If you have family or friends in Israel and they are safe, reassure your child. If they are not, be honest about that too, with the right level of detail for your child. Lying about hard things makes it much worse when the truth comes out. Assure your children that they are safe.

Early Childhood: Your kids likely know something is up, especially if you are upset. Be careful with news, podcasts, phone calls, etc and try, as much as you can, to keep things normal for your kids. If they ask questions, take a deep breath before you answer and try to answer with only the most necessary and straightforward language you can. Do not lie, but you do not need to give all the details. Assure them that they are safe.