

addressing antisemitism

For Parents

Dealing with antisemitism at School and Peer Relationships: Age-Appropriate Strategies

Resource created by Lisa Balderman, LCSWR

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Recognizing antisemitic Incidents

- **Open Communication:** Create a safe space for your child to share their experiences. Ask open-ended questions like, "Tell me about your day," to encourage them to express any concerns.
- **Use Age-Appropriate Language:** Simplify the concept of antisemitism. For instance, "Sometimes people say or do hurtful things because they don't understand. If someone says something mean about being Jewish, you can tell a teacher or come talk to me."

Communicating Effectively:

- **Expressing Emotions:** Teach them simple phrases like, "That hurt my feelings" or "I don't like it when people say things like that."
- **Involving Trusted Adults:** Help them identify a trusted adult at school, like a teacher or counselor, and explain when and how to seek their support.

Standing Up for Themselves:

- **Self-Advocacy Tools:** Provide scripts for assertive communication. For example, "I don't like it when you make fun of me because of my religion. Please stop."
- **Reinforce School Policies:** Emphasize that they have the right to learn in a safe environment. Encourage them to speak up and report incidents.

Addressing Mental Health Impact:

- **Signs of Distress:** Look for changes in behavior, such as withdrawal, changes in appetite, or difficulties sleeping. If they express feeling upset, explore these emotions together.
- **Professional Help:** If needed, involve a school counselor or mental health professional. Use language like, "Sometimes talking to someone who helps people with feelings can make things feel better."

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MIDDLE SCHOOL

Recognizing antisemitic Incidents

- **Open Communication:** Encourage discussions about their experiences. Use news stories or hypothetical scenarios to prompt conversations about antisemitism.
- **Use Age-Appropriate Language:** Provide more context, saying, "antisemitism is when people say or do mean things because of someone's Jewish background."

Communicating Effectively:

- **Expressing Emotions:** Build on their vocabulary for self-expression. Discuss phrases like, "it's not okay to make fun of someone because of their religion."
- **Involving Trusted Adults:** Reinforce the importance of talking to teachers or school counselors. Role-play scenarios to boost their confidence in seeking help.

Standing Up for Themselves:

- **Self-Advocacy Tools:** Teach assertiveness, such as saying, "I won't tolerate antisemitism. Please respect my beliefs."
- **Reinforce School Policies:** Emphasize the school's commitment to a safe environment. Discuss consequences for those who engage in discriminatory behavior.

Addressing Mental Health Impact:

- **Signs of Distress:** Look for signs like mood swings, increased irritability, or a decline in academic performance. Discuss these changes openly and without judgement.
- **Professional Help:** Normalize seeking professional support. "Sometimes, when things are tough, talking to a counselor can be really helpful."

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HIGH SCHOOL

Recognizing antisemitic Incidents

- **Open Communication:** Engage in broader discussions about world events and their impact on antisemitism. Encourage them to critically analyze information.
- **Use Age-Appropriate Language:** Introduce concepts like microaggressions and systemic discrimination. “antisemitism can be subtle or systemic. Let’s talk about recognizing both.”

Communicating Effectively:

- **Expressing Emotions:** Discuss complex emotions and nuanced conversations. Encourage them to say, “Your comment is offensive, and I won’t tolerate it.”
- **Involving Trusted Adults:** Reinforce that they can turn to teachers, school counselors, or administrators. Discuss reporting processes.

Standing Up for Themselves:

- **Self-Advocacy Tools:** Develop critical thinking and debate skills. “You can challenge antisemitic views with well-reasoned arguments. Know when to disengage and report if necessary.”
- **Reinforce School Policies:** Discuss the importance of collective responsibility in maintaining a respectful environment.

Addressing Mental Health Impact:

- **Signs of Distress:** Encourage self-reflection. Discuss how stress may manifest and strategies for coping. If needed, explore professional counseling options.