

DISCUSSING TRAGIC EVENTS WITH CHILDREN

Because of the influx of inquiries regarding the Kletzky tragedy, we are posting some of the pointers developed by Dr. Blumenthal and our staff regarding your children. Please keep in mind the unique needs and characteristics of every child when tailoring these recommendations to them.

- **ANY INFORMATION THAT A CHILD IS LIKELY TO HEAR FROM A MEMBER OF THEIR PEER GROUP SHOULD BE PRE-EMPTED AND IMMEDIATELY DISCUSSED WITH A RESPONSIBLE ADULT AND PREFERABLY A PARENT.**
- **PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THAT IN TODAY'S WORLD CHILDREN ARE FAR MORE PRONE TO FIND OUT INFORMATION OR SEEK IT OUT THAN THEY HAVE IN THE PAST EVEN WHEN YOU WERE YOUNG.**
- **UNFORTUNATELY, THIS PROBABLY INCLUDES INFORMATION WE'D RATHER SPARE THEM SUCH AS GRUESOME ASPECTS OF THIS TRAGEDY AND THE BACKGROUND OF THE SUSPECT.**
- **TRAGEDIES OF THIS PROPORTION ARE BREEDING GROUNDS FOR RUMOURS AND EXAGGERATION. INSIST THAT YOUR CHILD DISCUSS WITH YOU OR THEIR REBBI/TEACHER ANY EMBELLISHMENTS OF THE STORY THAT THEY HEAR FROM OTHERS.**
- **BE SURE YOU HAVE COME TO TERMS, AS MUCH AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE, WITH THE ENORMITY AND HORROR OF THIS CATASTROPHE BEFORE TALKING TO YOUR CHILD. THEY WILL SENSE YOUR CONFUSION OR UNBRIDLED DISTRESS AND COULD BE FURTHER TRAUMATIZED BY THAT**
- **WHEN INFORMED, PLEASE ALLOW FOR THEIR EXPECTED EXPRESSION OF DISTRESS AND FEAR ASSURING YOUR CHILD HOW "NORMAL THAT IS.**
- **YOU CAN CRY AND DISPLAY DISTRESS AS WELL WHILE EXPLAINING TO YOUR CHILD THAT THIS IS NORMAL FOR ADULTS AS WELL AND THAT YOUR STATUS AS A GROWN UP IS NOT COMPROMISED.**
- **WHILE YOUR CHILD IS EXPERIENCING THE HORROR AND DREAD OF THESE OCCURENCES IT IS NOT THE TIME TO DISCUSS OR REMIND THEM OF ISSUES REGARDING SAFETY AND STRANGERS. THIS SHOULD BE DONE AFTER THEY HAVE MORE OR LESS COMPOSED THEMSELVES AND ARE IN A POSITION TO RATIONALLY UNDERSTAND.**
- **UNFORTUNATELY AND IN LIGHT OF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THIS TRAGEDY, WE HAVE TO ALERT OUR CHILDREN TO THE FACT THAT POTENTIAL PERPETRATORS CAN LOOK FAMILIAR AND MAY EVEN BE KNOWN TO US.**

- **A CHILD WHO DEMONSTRATES A RELUCTANCE TO DISCUSS SUCH MATTERS SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO DO SO BUT ASSURED THAT AT ANY TIME THEY CAN COME BACK AND RAISE ANY ISSUES. AS LONG AS THAT CHILD DOES NOT EVIDENCE COVERT DISTRESS OR DIMINISHED FUNCTIONING AND IS SUFFICIENTLY COGNIZANT OF SAFETY PRECAUTIONS, THERE IS NO NEED TO FORCE THE ISSUE.**
- **DISCUSSING THE EVENTS TOO MUCH OR ANXIOUSLY REITERATING SAFETY PRECAUTIONS CAN, PARADOXICALLY, ENGENDER MORE ANXIETY. AS WITH EVERYTHING, EXERCISE MODERATION.**
- **WHILE COMMUNICATING PRECAUTIONS IF LOST OR APPROACHED OR SOLICITED BY AN ADULT, EMPHASIZE AS WELL THAT THESE OCCURRENCES ARE EXCEPTIONS AND THAT THE WORLD IS LARGELY A SAFE PLACE.**
- **TAILOR YOUR MESSAGE TO THE UNIQUE PROPENSITIES OF YOUR CHILD. A CHILD PRONE TO FEAR AND TIMIDITY MAY NEED A STRONGER MESSAGE OF THEIR INHERENT SAFETY AS LONG AS PRECAUTIONS ARE EXERCIZED. A MORE BRAZEN AND RISK TAKING CHILD MAY NEED MORE STRIDENT WARNINGS OF THE POTENTIAL DANGERS THAT ARE PRESENT.**
- **KEEP IN MIND THAT REACTIONS TO SUCH CATASTROPHE ARE NOT ALWAYS PREDICTABLE AND ORDERLY. YOU AND YOUR CHILD MAY HAVE MORE INTRUSIVE AND HORRIFIC RESPONSES AT LATER JUNCTURES THAN YOU DO AT THIS TIME. THIS IS NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY.**

We hope this information is helpful and please feel free to contact Chai Lifeline or Dr. Blumenthal, Rabbi Klar, Zahava Farbman CSW, or Dr. Greenberger if we can be of any further help.

May we soon bear witness to a time when such suggestions and advice are unnecessary.