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The Jewish Education Center of Cleveland's
Immediate Response Curriculum
September 11, 2001:
A Day Of National Tragedy

Overview

Today's news describing in graphic details the attacks on the World Trade Center Towers in New York and the Pentagon Building in Washington is painful. These attacks wreaked immeasurable damage to the lives of countless innocent individuals who have been killed or injured, or who know or are related to someone affected so directly.

To all of you have been personally affected by this tragedy, may you be comforted among all the Mourners of Zion.

The Curriculum Resources Department of the Jewish Education Center of Cleveland (JECC) has developed this particular resource to assist schools in developing responses to this national tragedy. These responses may take the form of prayer, memorialization, and comforting those directly affected by the terrorist attacks.

In this resource packet you will find:

Background Information
Dealing with Tragedy
Activities
Resources

Please Note: In the interest of speed, this curriculum does not include texts or a detailed list of resources. However, we refer you to previous Response Curricula that do include these components that may be of use to your educational program. These may be downloaded from the JECC's website: <http://www.jecc.org/edres/curric/curric.htm>.

- The Battle Over Kosovo (April 9, 1999) - Includes a thematic section on peace
- Colorado School Shooting (April 21, 1999) - Includes themes of mourning and healing, as well as one on respect for life.
- 1999 - Summer of Hate, Summer of Unity (August 24, 1999) - Includes texts and resources on prejudice, intolerance and hatred, as well as detailed sections titled, "If I am not for myself alone" and "If not now, when?"

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- A hijacked plane hit the north tower of the World Trade Center in Manhattan shortly before 9 a.m., followed by another plane into the second tower about 20 minutes later. Both towers later collapsed. Seven buildings comprised this complex, the most impressive being the twin towers. The 110-story towers were 1353 feet high. Construction on the towers was completed in 1973. Approximately 50,000 people work in the complex. Final casualty figures will not be released for some time.



http://www.worldexecutive.com/cityguides/new_york/maps.html



Close up of Lower Manhattan

http://www.worldexecutive.com/cityguides/new_york/maps.html



http://www.msnbc.com/news/627028_asp.htm



http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/buildingbig/wonder/structure/world_trade.html

- American Airlines reported that it lost two planes in these tragic accidents: Flight 11 from Boston with 81 passengers and 11 crew aboard and Flight 77 from Washington Dulles airport with 58 passengers and six crew aboard. Both planes were en route to Los Angeles.
- About an hour later, an aircraft crashed on a helicopter landing pad near the Pentagon. A portion of one side of the five-sided structure collapsed.
- United Airlines reported that United Airlines Flight 93 from Newark to San Francisco had been hijacked and crashed near Pittsburgh. The number of passengers was not immediately available. The airline said another, en route from Boston to Los Angeles, also crashed. No other details were immediately available.
- A map of the attacks, tracing the planes' air routes, is available from CNN at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/trade.center/map.html>.
- Israeli Defense Minister Ben-Eliezer approved the dispatch of IDF rescue units to the U.S.

(See Resource Sheet A for CNN's summary of the day's events.)

HELPING STUDENTS DEAL WITH TRAGEDY

Every child will be touched in some way, whether it is through the emotions felt by their parents and teachers or through the coverage on television, newspapers, the internet, and even talk on the street.

Social workers and other mental health experts offer these thoughts and suggestions:

- When tragedy strikes, younger students will sense the emotional responses of the adults around them, understanding that something bad has happened. This is not to suggest that adults must hide their emotions, but that they should at least be alert to effects on children.
- Students might find themselves reacting to a specific situation because of a number of factors:
 - They probably have seen a picture or heard a graphic description of the event.
 - They may know of a relative or friend hurt or killed in one of the attacks.
 - They may have a relative in the military.
 - It might remind them of a past loss.
 - They might be personally familiar with the location.

Without treading into therapeutic-territory, educators might need to help students identify why they are reacting in a particular way to a news event. The school director, parent, or rabbi should to be informed of any issues.

- It is important to be honest with students. While teachers may choose to omit information (such as graphic details), acknowledging a tragedy, its issues and tumultuous emotions is crucial. Adults need to reassure children that their feelings are appropriate and normal. Most importantly, the adult's role in a situation of this nature is to give full attention to a child's concerns, anger, frustration or sadness, by listening carefully and acknowledging feelings.
- Children need to be reassured that adults will always do their best to keep children safe and healthy.
- Older students will understand the broader intellectual implications of the political situation and may have feelings or fears that need to be dealt with.
- Sadness and anger can be exacerbated by feelings of helplessness. Finding ways to empower students begins to ameliorate overwhelming emotional responses.

Rabbi David Wolpe offers some excellent insight about this issue in his book, Teaching Your Children About G-d. (NY: Henry Holt and Co., Inc., 1993)

Adults must remember that younger children view such violence as unfair, and since children want to view the world as a fair place, this may be the first challenge of their worldview.

There is often not an answer to “why?” Educators must recognize that the question is an indication of the children’s fears. They need to be reassured not just of their safety, but of their worth. Children often feel that if they are “bad” they will get hurt as well.

A way to bring G-d into the picture is to remind the children that G-d gave us the gift of being able to make choices. Some people make choices that hurt or sadden others. The consequences of freewill granted by G-d may seem unfair to children (and adults).

Related Web Links:

- USA Today: Calm young children; explain to older kids
<http://www.usatoday.com/life/2001-09-12-talking-to-kids.htm>
 - Familyeducation.com: Helping Kids Cope in a Time of Crisis and Fear
<http://www.familyeducation.com>
 - Parentsoup.com: Family Psychologist
<http://www.parentsoup.com>
 - Association of Jewish Family and Children’s Agencies (originally published 1999)
<http://ajfca.org/crisis.html>
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ACTIVITIES

Responses Through Our Tradition:

- Jews respond to tragedies through personal and communal actions. As a communal response, bring the school together for a worship service and/or assembly with music. Include readings from students and texts from our tradition.
- Fulfill the *mitzvah* (commandment) of *bikur holim* (visiting the sick) by sending get well cards to those injured, calling friends and relatives in affected areas, or communicating by e-mail.
- Fulfill the *mitzvah* (commandment) of *pikuah nefesh* (saving a life) by donating blood to the American Red Cross's national blood bank. Donors who wish to give blood in the coming days to replenish the nation's blood supply are encouraged to call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE to make an appointment. Find your local American Red Cross by going online at <http://www.redcross.org/where/where.html>.
- Light *yizkor* candles.
- Pray *El Malei Raḥamim*; study the words with the students.
- Recite a *mi sheberakh* for those who were injured.
- Recite the *Kaddish*.
- Recite "A Prayer." (See Resource Sheet B) Ask students to compose their own prayers in response to this tragedy.
- Recite *Tehillim* (Psalms).
- Write letters of condolence using the Jewish phrase: *Ha-Makom yenaḥem ethem b'toh sh'ar evlei Tzion v'Yerushalayim*. May you be comforted among the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.
- Study some section from the *Mishnah* in memory of the departed souls.
- Give *tzedakah* (charity) in memory of those killed.

Responses Through The Spoken Word:

- Supplementary school teachers should be aware that students probably discussed the terrorist attacks in their general studies classes. With this in mind, focus your class discussions on tradition Jewish themes such as: *lo tirtzah* (the prohibition against murder); the sanctity of life; *pikuah nefesh* (saving a life); *hesed shel emet* (true acts of kindness/honoring the dead and comforting mourners); *zahor* (remembrance); and *bikur holim* (visiting the sick).
- Offer opportunities for students to talk about their reactions to the events, with therapists trained to deal with crises.
- Assure students that the adults around them will provide for their safety.
- Discuss what students have heard, read and/or seen about the events. Encourage them to respond to each other (e.g., "What might you say to Hanna to help her feel better?) and to search out the information which would help them better understand the situation.

- President Bush made a brief statement to reporters, calling the disaster a “national tragedy” and attributed it to terrorists. He did not cite any specific terrorist groups but vowed to “hunt down the folks who committed this act.” Discuss what might be **appropriate** and **realistic** responses to the terrorist attacks.
- British Prime Minister Tony Blair responded to the events by saying: “This mass terrorism is the new evil in our world today. It is perpetrated by fanatics who are utterly indifferent to the sanctity of life.” Ask students to locate and discuss reactions from other world leaders to the tragedy.

Responses Through The Arts:

- Make a collage using newspaper articles, headlines and pictures. Add words of remembrance (e.g., *zahor*) from Jewish tradition.
- Create a remembrance board. Back a bulletin board with dark paper. Use the Hebrew date, **כ"ג אלול תשס"א** /23 Elul 5761 as the title. Create paper *yizkor* candles. Ask each student to write on a candle a prayer in response to the tragedies. Display the candles.
- Create a "tear art" picture. Distribute 12x18 white or black paper and glue sticks. Provide sheets of colored paper from which students can tear images to express their feelings and understandings of the terrorist attacks.
- Provide a variety of art supplies and ask students to create a picture using the Hebrew word **לחיים** (*l'hayim*), or number **חי** (*hai*) – both to life! Ask students how we could honor the lives of those who have died.

Responses Through The Written Word:

- Place a large sheet of bulletin board paper on a wall for students and staff "graffiti" responses to the bombings or wishes for peace.
- Create a condolence book that can be signed by students, staff and parents.
- Encourage students to e-mail family members and friends who were directly touched by this tragedy, offering words of support.

Responses Through The Computer:

- JewzNewz.com (<http://www.jewznewz.com/>) - Jewish Family & Life! has launched a new website for Jewish responses to the terrorist acts against the U.S, including: news, a discussion board, curricula, and responses.
- Schools with websites, listservs or e-mail access for students and parents may want to share thoughts online as a community.
- The UAHC's Department of Education has produced response materials entitled: “A Day in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.” The materials are available at <http://www.uahc.org/educate/sept11>.

- The Department for Jewish Zionist Education has developed a site, “Israel Mourns The Victims of Terror Attacks in the USA,” with links to curricular ideas and resources. The materials are available at <http://www.jajz-ed.org.il/actual/usa/index.html>.
- The following sites have information about the terrorist attacks: All the on-line services provide up-to-date news services.
 - CNN Interactive – <http://www.cnn.com>
 - Reuters News – [http:// www.yahoo.com/headlines](http://www.yahoo.com/headlines)
 - MSNBC – <http://www.msnbc.com>
 - Time for Kids – <http://www.timeforkids.com/TFK>
 - New York Times: Teacher Connections - <http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/>

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RESOURCES

Books:

Gellman, Rabbi Marc and Hartman, Monsignor Thomas. *How Do You Spell God? Answers to Tough Questions from Around the World*. NY: Morrow, 1995.

A rabbi and a priest collaborate to show young people how the world's great religions answer universal questions such as " ' Why does bad stuff happen to good people?' " For grades 6 -9.

Gellman, Rabbi Marc and Hartman, Monsignor Thomas. *Lost and Found: A Kid's Book For Living Through Loss*. NY: Morrow, 1999.

TV's popular "God Squad" draw upon their years of counseling experience to suggest universal truths to help young people deal with losses great and small. For grades 5 - 8.

Intrater, Aaron. *The Voice of Wisdom*. Cleveland, OH: Bureau of Jewish Education, 1965.

A guide to the wisdom literature of the Bible for youth and adults. Among the topics covered are problems of evil and suffering, is there justice?, and some suggestions about the value of life. For grades 9 - adult.

Kornblatt, Marc. *Understanding Buddy*. NY: Margaret McElderry Books, 2001.

Eleven year old Sam tries to befriend a new classmate whose mother has been killed in a traffic accident. As he searches for answers to questions about death and friendship, he looks to Judaism for help and finds it. For grades 5 - 7.

Olitzky, Kerry M., et al. *When Your Jewish Child Asks Why: Answers for Tough Questions*. Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1993.

A book for adults to use to help them answer some of the tough questions that children ask relating to Judaism. Among the questions are "Why are there bad people in the world?", "Why do people have to die?", and "Why can't there be peace all the time?" The questions are typical of those asked by children from ages five to ten.

Wolpe, Rabbi David. *Making Loss Matter*. NY: Riverhead/Penguin-Putnam, 1999.

The author offers an approach to making loss meaningful - to transforming something painful into a "generator of purpose and hope." For adults.

RESOURCE SHEET A

Terror attacks hit U.S.

Posted: September 11, 2001



People walk away from the World Trade Center as ash rains down.

NEW YORK (CNN) -- Terrorists struck the United States Tuesday morning in harrowing, widespread attacks that included at least three commercial jet crashes into significant buildings.

- In the first attack, a plane hits the north tower of the World Trade Center in Manhattan shortly before 9 a.m., followed by another plane into the second tower about 20 minutes later. Both towers later collapse.
- About an hour later, a plane crashes into the Pentagon, part of which later collapses.
- American Airlines tells CNN that it lost two planes, both en route to Los Angeles: American Flight 11 from Boston with 81 passengers and 11 crew aboard is lost. This is believed, but not confirmed, to have been one of the planes that crashed into the trade center. American Flight 77, a Boeing 757 from Washington Dulles airport to Los Angeles with 58 passengers and six crew is unaccounted for. Witness says plane that hit Pentagon was an American Airlines Boeing 757.
- United Airlines loses two planes: United Airlines Flight 93 airliner headed from Newark, New Jersey, to San Francisco, crashes near Somerset, Pennsylvania -- police say initial reports indicate no survivors. United confirms the crash of Flight 175 from Boston to Los Angeles with 56 passengers and seven crew aboard. It's possible, but not confirmed, that this is the second plane that hit the World Trade Center.
- FBI sources said all four planes that crashed had been hijacked.
- The Pentagon, the White House, the State Department, the Justice Department, the Capitol, the CIA and all other government buildings in Washington are evacuated.

- President Bush calls the crashes "a national tragedy." Later in the day, Bush issues a statement from Barksdale AFB near Shreveport, Louisiana. "Make no mistake: The United States will hunt down and punish those responsible for these cowardly acts."
- In the first-ever national ground stop of aircraft, all flights nationwide are stopped at their departure airports.
- International flights are initially diverted to Canada; FAA says later, however, that 22 U.S.-bound international flights will be allowed to land.
- Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, says in reaction to the terror attacks that "we want to tell the American children that Afghanistan feels your pain and we hope that the courts find justice."
- In New York, more than 10,000 rescue personnel rush to the scene. Evacuation of lower Manhattan begins.
- Israel evacuates all of its missions around the world.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta is evacuated. CDC prepares bioterrorism teams in case they become necessary.
- Philadelphia landmarks are evacuated.
- In Chicago, the Sears Tower is evacuated; United Nations in New York is evacuated.
- Five battleships and two aircraft are deployed along the East Coast of the United States, and two aircraft carriers go to New York area, all from Norfolk, Virginia.
- The New York Port Authority closes all bridges and tunnels into the city.
- U.S. stock markets close after the New York attacks.
- NATO sends home all non-essential personnel from its Brussels, Belgium, headquarters.
- The Immigration and Naturalization Service puts the U.S. borders with Mexico and Canada on highest state of alert.
- Los Angeles International Airport is evacuated.
- Disney closes its parks in Orlando, Florida, and Disneyland in Anaheim, California.
- FEMA implements plan established for such events: FBI leads investigation, and Justice Department heads crisis management.

- Three Palestinian groups -- Hamas, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Islamic Jihad -- deny responsibility for the attacks, but blame U.S. policies in the Mideast.
- Mayor Anthony Williams of Washington, D.C., declares a state of emergency.
- A Delta flight makes emergency landing in Cleveland and all passengers are safely evacuated. Federal officials search the plane for a possible bomb.

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RESOURCE SHEET B**A Prayer**

We offer a prayer for strength and comfort in the face of terror unimaginable until today.

Lord,

Source of Life, Creator of all flesh,
From out of the depths we call unto you.
Protect us from the hand of all our enemies.
Comfort Your children who now stand alone
without parent or brother or sister or child.
Strengthen us to stand with those orphaned by this attack on our country.
This country, our country, shelter of peace to the downtrodden,
which has gathered in millions of the peoples of the world
stands as a beacon of light and justice,
but today is dimmed with horror and tragedy.
New York and Washington, shining cities,
diminished like Jerusalem after the destruction of our holy Temple,
need Your comfort, and our aid;
help us to maintain our courage and our efforts to support our people.
Strengthen the hands of those who defend this country,
and those who try to maintain peace against these attacks.
Teach us to speak to our children
with love and support and courage and understanding,
for we are all fearful, although their fears may not be our fears.
Gain for us a heart of wisdom,
that we may act out of compassion and thoughtfulness,
and not out of anger or prejudice.
Accept with mercy our prayers for our country and its government
for its president, judges, officials and institutions who faithfully toil for the good of our
country.
May they, with Your guidance, lead us back to lives of peace in a land we have come to
love.

Jeffrey Spitzer

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