

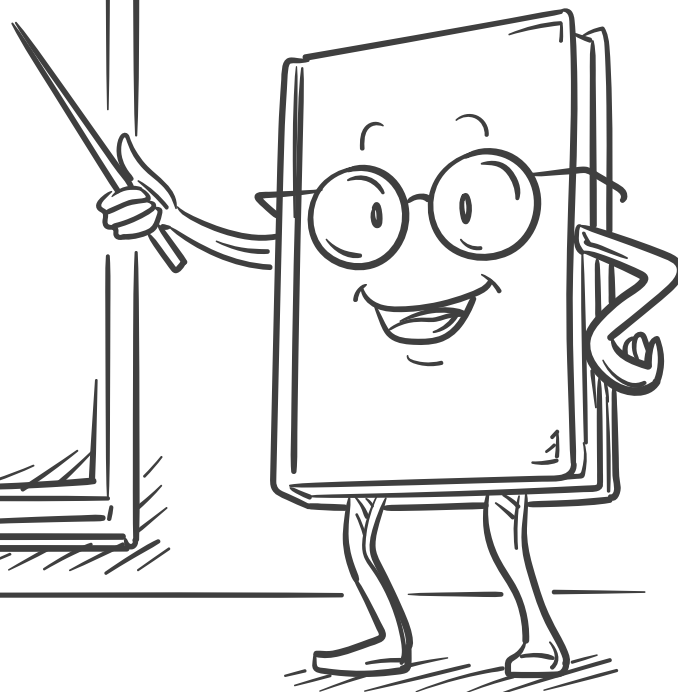


# darcheinu

## Discussing Delicate Current Events with our Children

### Strategies & Hashkafa

January 4, 2022



**TORAHUMESORAH**

Darcheinu is Endorsed by the  
Vaad Roshei HaYeshiva of Torah Umesorah  
and is under the auspices of  
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## Questions?

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**T**hroughout the development of a child's formative years, he/she begins to become more aware of mature topics that exist in the world around us, and are a part of our current events. This is a healthy development, but it produces a challenging situation where the child's awareness can develop faster than his maturity to handle more delicate topics. Here are some basic points to keep in mind that can help us maintain balance in recognizing both of these normal aspects of a child's development.

**1.** There is generally no need to present less known delicate current events to our children. If they are not asking us about it, and we are confident they are not quietly thinking about it, **why create a challenging situation for the child?** Unfortunately teaching opportunities will arise, and the later they do, the easier for the child to healthily digest the “grays” of our world.

**2.** Please **avoid showing your children, and prevent them from watching** to the best of your ability, **graphic videos of current events**. These can be traumatic for adults, let alone children and teens. Children today are often watching clips (even from from news sources) that are too painful and frightening for them to process at their age. These can be psychologically damaging to children, and may trigger unnecessary nightmares and fears.

**3.** If a child is asking/or we know that he probably is aware/or there is a tangible directive from Daas Torah instructing us to take action that would trigger thinking/questioning, then **we must present some information, but purposely not share all the details we may be aware of.**

**a. Stating the facts in a calm and confident tone,** explicitly articulating a solid hashkafa in such a tone is the main goal in such a conversation.

**Please see the following chapters in this booklet, which outline such hashkafic points.**

**b.** If the child expresses or hints at any obviously inaccurate misinformation, these **details must be clarified and corrected.**

**c.** Enough detail should be presented to provide some context for what happened. **Generally less is more,** but providing extremely sparse information can leave the child **confused and wondering** to a **degree more than necessary.**

**d. Normalize confusing feelings.** Even as adults we have feelings of confusion when difficult scenarios occur in life, but we gain the best context we can, emphasize the proper Torah hashkafa, and move forward, making sure to seek additional help if we are having a hard time.

**4.** If the child is speaking about the situation, allow them to speak to their heart's content. **Give them the time to vent.** Speaking about a difficult situation, is itself therapeutic, even without specific answers. **Don't give in to the natural urge to quickly "calm" the situation** let him/her speak. However, some children will be fine hearing a little piece of a confident message and move on.

Pay attention to their demeanor and mood over the next few days and weeks. **Significant changes should be noted, monitored, and discussed** with mechanchim and professionals.

**5.** If a child is asking about a scenario **in a group setting**, *e.g. in class, or among other siblings*, the child can be stopped short and told that the **situation they are bringing up is an important one and needs to be addressed** *making sure to validate his/her feelings and concerns*. It should then be addressed with a quick and confident message of proper Hashkafa *see #2 above*, and then the group can be told, **"if you have more questions or thoughts on the topic please come to me later in private so I can address each question appropriately"**. As children come to speak at various differing times with the rebbe/morah/parent, perhaps a reassessment is in order to determine if perhaps the majority of the class/family is still thinking about the situation, and can use a more substantial group-address on the topic.

**6. Role model** your own ability to healthily move forward by **maintaining an overall positive attitude on life**, and not speaking too much about it *at least in front of the children, but keep in mind, they have really good hearing*. Children learn extraordinarily well through watching what we do or don't do.

# A Hashkafic Perspective on Abuse for Older Children and Adults

The topic of abuse and the general question of “**Tzadik Vera Lo**” has confused, and worse, redirected people, for generations. Let’s outline a few important points that can be articulated to help gain some clarity on this matter. As is true with any topic that stands in the realm of the Ribono Shel Olam, we know that we cannot fully grasp the “bird’s eye view” of the matter, but we can use the light of our Torah to have some sense of it. Often, a good sense, is sufficient to allow the vast majority of people to digest these troubling events, and continue to live their lives with full and healthy emunah.

## IT IS IMPERATIVE TO BEGIN THIS DISCUSSION WITH ESTABLISHING A CRITICAL POINT ON THE TOPIC OF ABUSE:

**1. It is absolutely not the fault of the victim that was abused.** No matter what anyone says, they were **not** asking for it, or acting in a way that **invited it**, or weren’t prepared enough, **it is not their fault, period!** Hashem allows people to have bechira and if they choose to do evil with it, they and only they must answer to Him for what they have done.

*Victims and by-standers who speak up about abuse are heroes!*

**2.** If you ever do **feel unsafe** or you **see something** that is unsafe happening to someone else, you **must tell** your parents, rabbeim, morahs or another trusted adult **immediately**. Hashem wants this to be known to people who can help stop it, and keep everyone safe; it is therefore **totally not loshon hara** when discussing with those trusted adults.

*Even the person who is acting in the wrong way will be healthier and safer if he/she is stopped as soon as possible, and it is therefore a mitzva to speak up to these adults in your life right away and without delay.*

**3.** Regarding events where one person harmed another, one could ask a variation of the question: *Why would Hashem allow that to happen? Why would He allow the Nazis to commit the terrible atrocities they committed? Why would He allow murder or abuse to occur in our midst?* The beginning of the answer to this question is the concept of, bechira.

**a.** The whole world is here for human beings and especially Jews to work on themselves, recognize Hashem, and become closer to Him. Hashem gives us bechira so we can be more like Him and self-sufficiently “earn” the reward of the next world, basking in that closeness. If it would be a handout of reward, then we would never experience the true pleasure of being more similar to Him: He who needs nothing and is totally self-sufficient *see Ramchal: Derech Hashem and Daas Tevunos*. **Aside from transgressing Hashem’s explicit commands in the Torah when we act in evil and terrible ways, we are inherently choosing to distance ourselves from Hashem unless proper teshuva is done.** Hashem will allow this to happen, so as not to take away humanity’s bechira. If all people who tried to commit evil acts, died on the spot before they could perpetrate, there would be no real bechira. Bechira only exists in a world where people can choose to be evil, or choose to be good.

- b.** This idea behooves us to educate our youth to be careful and safe in the world. Evil acts can and do happen, and we have to do everything we can to protect ourselves. When we do that as parents, and educators on behalf of our children, not only does that naturally help our youth, it also triggers **siyata dishmaya through our hishtadlus, to help keep ourselves and our youth safe.**
- c.** It is also important to stress that these events are more rare, **especially with proper preparation and education**, and Hashem does not want us to live our lives filled with anxiety.

*Some people become so engrossed in their evil ways, it becomes habit, and even addictive. This can then be seen as sickness that can cause them to never stop what they are doing, and do things that are illogical and destructive. They are still held accountable since they initially chose to go down the slippery slope they embarked on. They should have sought out help earlier when it was possible to do so. Some people are born with a mental illness that develops in adolescence, and adulthood, and they cannot stop themselves from being a harm to society. In this case, they are usually treated as a dangerous creature, and just as a dangerous animal is locked up to protect society, so too the dangerous human with such a condition. Their free life does not take precedence over the safety and well-being of the general society.*

**4.** The whole concept of there being a more Real World, the Next World, is an important concept to consider. This world is tiny compared to the next. The mishna in Avos implies that the **fragrance outside the gates of Gan Eden is more pleasurable** than all the moments of pleasure every human being who ever walked the face of the earth ever experienced in his/her lifetime, all combined into one ridiculously unimaginably pleasurable moment.

**5. Hashem never ever allows someone to go unpaid for what they did.** This can mean that someone was harmed, and survived, and deserves all the more reward for living on (lefum tzara agra, in accordance with the difficulty, is the reward). **It can also mean that a person committed a crime, and hurt others, and he/she now deserves justice and punishment for what they did.** They will absolutely receive their justice. It can in some form in this world, but it will surely come in full form in the next world, where Hashem, in His infinite intelligence and understanding, will care for the weak and the victims, and punish the abusers. He never “forgets”, cannot be charismatically talked out of true justice, and He always cares for the weak. The Torah repeats many times the importance of caring for the widow, orphan, and convert, due to their more vulnerable position. If this applies to such vulnerable people, how much more so to those who have already suffered so vulnerably. **Hashem sees all and in the totality of reality (it can be in some form in this world and the next) will ensure justice is served and the victims are truly cared for.**

**6. It is normal to feel conflicting emotions when either having experienced, or simply hearing about such an ordeal.** One may feel happy at times if the abuser is caught, and yet worried or distraught if the abuser is caught and now embarrassed. One may worry what will happen to the abuser, and at the same time feel good that the abuser is finally getting a “taste of his/her own medicine”, feeling a sense of revenge. All of these emotions are real and normal, and Hashem created us in this type of way; this is what makes us human. It is important to simply be authentic and honest with Hashem. Speak in English or whatever your best tongue is to Hashem at the end of shmone esrei, **pour your heart out to Him, asking Him for clarity, and for the victim to get the support they need, and to properly heal.**



## THE BOTTOM LINE OF ALL OF THESE CONCEPTS IS

Hashem always cares about us as a whole and individually. He loves our tefillos, and the relationship we build with Him. He is asking us to trust Him when things don't go as we would want them to go. He is asking us to trust Him when He tells us that He is taking care of us. If anything bad ever happens to us we should never lose faith, and know that Hashem has a plan that is larger than life. If He put us in a situation, He will help us get through it, we just have to do the one thing Hashem wants us to do more than anything else: seek out the help we need, do everything we can to stop the bad from continuing to happen, and heal. He loves us and wants us to be whole holy, and close to Him.

## IF YOU FIND OUT A FRIEND WAS ABUSED....

- 1.** Make sure they have informed the right adults who can properly help them and handle the matter. If they seem hesitant to do so, it is your responsibility to bring it to the attention of a trusted adult.
- 2.** Make it clear that you are always there for them, but respect their need for space. Be there for them as a regular friend, and do not assume that they want to discuss the nature of their abuse with you.

## A Hashkafic Perspective on Abuse for Young Children

**W**hen a young child becomes aware of frightening news, or troublesome current events, where either tragic accidents happen or an evil act is committed, he/she needs to be given, with confidence, a solid Hashkafic perspective to healthily digest what they heard. As mentioned in our other section, “Discussing Delicate Current Events With Our Children”, it is always better for the child to not be made aware of the story that happened. There is no need for a parent or teacher to introduce these stories to the children, and then try to help them healthily process. Unfortunately, there will be opportunities that come up for such training, and the more mature the child is when starting to learn how to process these, the better. There is no need to assume that “all the children will be talking about it, so I better tell my child or students”, since if most people follow the advice here, that certainly won’t be the case. Additionally, many times as adults, we assume that a story is all over the place, and very curious, and yet in the world of a young child, it naturally draws their attention less than the here and now of their lives. However, if it is purposely introduced to them as a major piece of information they must know about, then their ears perk up, and they begin to grapple with it. If they do end up hearing about it, and wondering about it, here are some simple Hashkafic points that can be presented to a young child. Depending on the situation and the nature of the child’s questions, not all the points necessarily need to be presented.

**1.** Generally the world is a safe place and there is no need to live in constant worry. **Hashem wants us to feel safe in the world, and be able to relax and enjoy His beautiful world.**

**2. Hashem also wants us to do our part to be safe.** Therefore, we must be careful, and follow the precautions we (Parents or Rabbeim/Morahs) have presented to you *if these safety tips have never been presented to the child, now is a good time to do so, feel free to reach out to [info@darcheinu.org](mailto:info@darcheinu.org) for suggestions.* If we follow these guidelines though, then we do not live our lives in constant fear. Hashem wants us to live be'simcha and be'menuchas hanefesh.

**3.** If you ever do **feel unsafe** or you **see something that is unsafe** happening to someone else, you **must tell** your parents, rabbeim, morahs, immediately. Hashem wants this to be known to people who can help stop it, and keep everyone safe; it is therefore totally not loшон hara when discussing with your parents, rabbeim, and morahs.

*Even the person who is acting in the wrong way will be healthier and safer if he/she is stopped as soon as possible, and it is therefore a mitzva to speak up to these adults in your life right away and without delay.*

**4. Hashem can do anything!** But He allows people to choose how they want to live. This is part of the whole purpose of the world, to choose good and follow the Torah and mitzvos, even where we can choose bad. It can be hard sometimes, so always **make sure to ask an adult for help if you are struggling with this.**

**5. Even the greatest people can make mistakes,** and that's why it is so **important to be careful,** and not just assume "nothing will happen to me"! You could be the greatest driver ever, but an accident can happen, therefore we always wear our seatbelt, just in case. If a person stops wearing their "seatbelt", which can mean other safety precautions in other areas of life, then they too may make a big mistake and hurt others. They could then end up trying to convince themselves that what they did is ok or even a mitzva, **when really it is not.**

**6.** Sometimes a person can get **so wrapped up in unhealthy behavior,** and the wrong thinking that what they are doing is right, that they can become sick in their minds with these thoughts. **This is also rare, but it can happen,** and if it does it can lead to that person hurting others, and even hurting themselves, sometimes majorly. The sickness causes them not to think straight anymore, and they can make really bad decisions. Hashem understands every person, and will judge that person the way he/she needs to be judged, but even if it was a sickness, if he brought it on himself, he is at fault for what happened in the end. **Hashem always makes sure justice is served,** if not in this world, then in the even more real world of olam haba.

**7.** Any person who was ever treated unfairly in this world, and the unfairness was not corrected in this world, will see the correction in the next world. **In the end, including olam haba, there is always justice.**

**8. Hashem loves us always,** and understands us always. If something sad happens in the world, there is a reason for it, but since we only see a short sample of the history of the world, and we don't see any of olam haba, **it is very difficult for us to understand the reason.** Everything Hashem does is for the good, but it can be hard to see what the good is sometimes. Although sometimes we can see the good soon after. For example, there were people who missed their flights and were really sad and upset! In the end they found out that something difficult happened on that flight, or at the place they were going to. **Hashem watches over each and every one of us and cares for us more deeply than we can ever know.**

**9.** We should daven to Him for help, at any time and in any place. He loves our tefillos, and is always listening. Sometimes He answers right away, and sometimes He doesn't, but **He always loves our tefillos.** As we said, if you feel unsafe or see something strange, **you make sure to tell a trusted adult in your life** (your parents, rabbeim, morahs, etc.) and **you daven to Hashem, and trust in Hashem.**

## A Hashkafic Perspective for Speaking to Victims of Abuse

**T**his resource is meant for victims of abuse and other crimes. When a person is victimized, he/she can feel like their whole world has been turned upside-down. What may have seemed simple and innocent in the past, may no longer seem so. What does Hashem expect from such a person? After all, He allowed this to happen right? How can this person go on without tremendous anxiety, skepticism, and pain? Perhaps it is easier to believe everything in the world is random and there is no Hashgacha chs"v. This document outlines a few points that can help those in a position to directly help victims better cope with the tragedy that was inflicted upon them.

**1. It is absolutely not your fault that you were abused.** No matter what anyone says, whether they say you were asking for it, or acting in a way that invited it, or weren't prepared enough, it is not your fault. Hashem allows people to have bechira and if they choose to do evil with it, they and only they must answer to Him for what they have done.

**2.** If you did indeed report what happened, as you should and you must, and something bad happened to the abuser/victimizer/criminal, **that is also absolutely not your fault.** Consider a thief entering your home, and as you are pushing him out, he slips and breaks his leg. **Is it your fault that he broke his leg? Of course not!** He chose to enter into a precarious, dangerous, harmful, and evil act, and he is now paying a little bit of the consequences for it.

What if he purposely broke his leg, perhaps as a way to garner sympathy for himself, that is equally not your fault, even more obviously so.

**3. Being a victim in these situations, is one of the most difficult things for a person to endure; Hashem knows and understands this.** We do B"H know many victims who have not only survived the abuse they endured, but they also ultimately **became even stronger people**, helping themselves become **closer to Hashem**. They also made sure to engage in smarter and healthier relationships, sustain vital support systems around themselves and their families, keeping more people safe and protected, and sometimes even help others who went through similar situations to what they went through. This in no way justifies the abuse (that person used his/her bechira for, wrongly), but it can allow for some purposeful growth moving forward.

**4. It is normal to feel conflicting emotions throughout the ordeal.** One may feel happy at times if the abuser is caught, and yet worried or distraught if the abuser is caught and now embarrassed. One may worry what will happen to the abuser, and at the same time feel good that the abuser is finally getting a "taste of his/her own medicine", feeling a sense of revenge. All of these emotions are real and normal, and Hashem created us in this type of way; this is what makes us human. It is important to simply be authentic and honest with Hashem. Speak in English (or whatever your best tongue is) to Hashem at the end of shmone esrei, pour your heart out to Him, asking Him for clarity, and more stabilized emotions. Ask Him to give you the strength to carry on. The whole world will definitely be a better place with you in it, as a growing and productive person. The abuse should have never happened, but now that it did, you have something very unique to offer the world, your family, and yourself through the process of healing.

5. Some people will feel like they are ok after the abuse, and do not need much intervention. This too is normal, but it is **still healthy to have an occasional check-in with a therapist and Rav you trust**, to have someone outside of yourself help to monitor your inner well-being. **Hashem wants us to seek out help from others**, and loves the unity amongst His children when such assistance is offered and received.

6. Lastly, **Hashem never ever allows someone to go unpaid for what they did**. This can mean that someone was harmed, and survived, and deserves all the more reward for living on (lefum tzara agra, in accordance with the difficulty, is the reward). It can also mean that a person committed a crime, and hurt others, and he/she now deserves justice and punishment for what they did. They will absolutely receive their justice. It can in some form in this world, but it will surely come in full form in the next world, where Hashem, in His infinite intelligence and understanding, will care for the weak and the victims, and punish the abusers. He never “forgets”, cannot be charismatically talked out of true justice, and He always cares for the weak. The Torah repeats many times the importance of caring for the widow, orphan, and convert, due to their more vulnerable position. If this applies to such vulnerable people, how much more so to those who have already suffered so vulnerably. **Hashem sees all and in the totality of reality (this world and the next) will ensure justice is served and the victims are truly cared for.**



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