

Teacher Guide: How to Create a Safe and Brave Space

What gives
you hope?

What does
peace look
like to you?

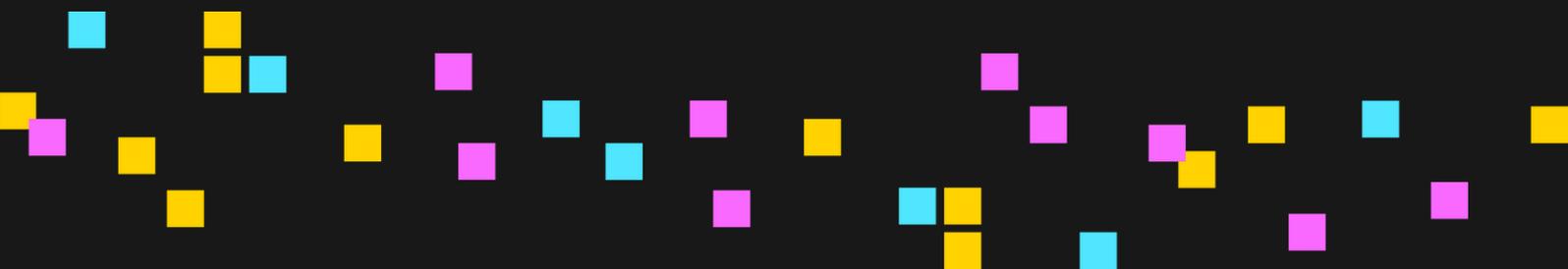
How do you
cope with fear
or anger?

How do
you react
to hate?

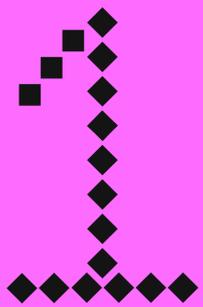
Introduction

This guide has been created to help schools and other educational bodies be able to openly discuss the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in school and feel prepared for that conversation to take place.

In SNS, we believe that avoiding discussing difficult topics can lead to a lack of understanding of them. This is disempowering for young people, who will seek information on these issues elsewhere, usually online. It is important to create safe spaces and provide life skills for British young people to make the difficult but vital conversations about Israel-Palestine not just possible but positive.

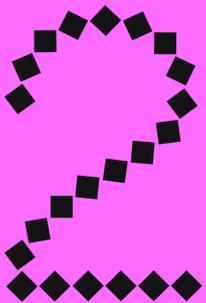


Talking about the topic in school



Why do students need this?

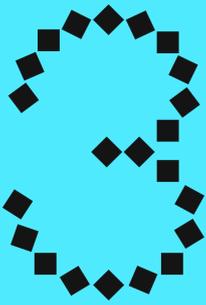
- There is confusion around what constitutes offensive or racist speech or attitudes
- Many students care about it personally and emotionally
- There is pressure to 'get involved' and take a side
- Some students clash over their understanding of it
- Palestine-Israel is in the headlines and on social media



Things to expect and look out for:

- Strong emotions, divergent views, and in some cases ignorance and/or completely one-dimensional perspectives
- Antisemitic and/or anti-Israeli attitudes*
- Islamophobic and/or anti-Palestinian attitudes*
- Feelings of shame or anxiety amongst students, who feel that their views may be taken as wrong, offensive, or anticipate being censured due to their views

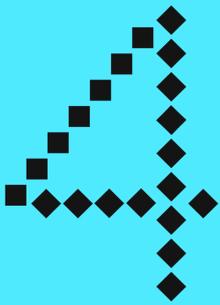
*See our guides to avoiding hateful speech and racism around this topic for further information



Creating trust with your students:

Inform the students that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a sensitive issue, an ongoing, lived conflict, and that some students present may feel strongly about it or even be directly affected by it. Explain that feeling empathy with others or frustration at injustices is a good thing, that's why it's best to talk about these issues, rather than ignore them. It's important that they understand various perspectives and come to their own conclusions. Tell them that the school will create an opportunity for a session about this topic where they will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss their views.

Emotions and safeguarding:

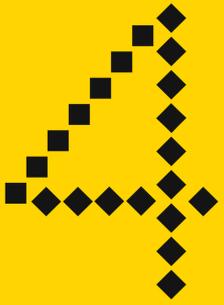


Whilst you are seeking to create a safe space and encourage open dialogue, you are now also aware that some students may be particularly emotionally connected to the conflict and those of particular backgrounds may need to be cared for.

Some actions to consider:

- Tell the students in advance that you will be studying or discussing the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and they can come to you with any questions or concerns ahead of time
- Tell them at the start of any class where this will be discussed that they do not have to share their personal views or opinions if they don't wish to
- Ensure that students are not pressuring other students to speak up, pick a side, or state a view
- If you spot a student looking particularly emotional, subtly ask them if they want some time out, and/or generally build some breaks into the schedule

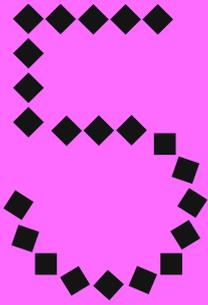
Emotions and safeguarding cont...



The topic of violence:

Another aspect of safeguarding students is watching for views that advocate for violence against others. Violence against civilians is unfortunately a common occurrence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whether by civilians against other civilians from both sides, or by Israeli soldiers or Palestinian militants against civilians. These are difficult but important discussions to have, which should not throw up any red signals or concerns about extremism when discussed within the framework of the Geneva Convention, International Law and the right to resistance or defence in a military context. Try encouraging discussion about other ways to channel anger or seek political change e.g. elections, campaigns, protests, lobbying, international justice institutions, direct nonviolent action etc. Focus on the consequences of the violence for ordinary people; why should any individual or family suffer because someone chooses violence to promote a political cause? Try to find human stories of those affected by violence. The Parents' Circle Families Forum is another good organisation to look at.

However, although a discussion about violence shouldn't automatically raise a red flag, there are some things to watch out for: Students advocating for and encouraging others to engage in violence or discrimination against UK citizens and not backing down e.g. 'I think that Jews/Muslims here deserve a taste of their own medicine and should experience violence/suffering too. Let's make this happen/let's do this' etc. Students referring to their intentions to join any form of violence in the UK or abroad e.g. 'I'm going to go to Palestine to help Palestinians fight the Israelis' or 'I'm going to stop pro-Palestine protesters in the UK by any means possible'. If you encounter any of the above, seek support through the school's safeguarding lead who will be up-to-date on the latest recommendations and action to protect students.



Summary:

- Provide a space and encourage discussion and learning on this topic
- Look out for sensitivities and build trust between yourself and the students
- Address strong negative emotions and attend to safeguarding
- Take additional recommended steps to ensure the space you have for discussion and learning on this topic to happen is a safe and compassionate one

Thank you

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