



## **Educational Responses in Emergency Situations**

*This guidance was written by Palestinian educator **Manar Wahab**, Director of Trauma-Informed Education at House of Hope Vision School, March 2026*

In times of emergency during war, the Waldorf approach focuses on “**Emergency Pedagogy**” to help stabilize children’s **physical, rhythmic, and emotional health** through familiar structures and artistic expression.

In Waldorf education, emergency pedagogy can be thought of as “**first aid for the soul.**” It uses rhythm and art to help calm children and their families during the chaos of war. These are simple steps with very meaningful and important benefits for both parents and children:

### **Establish a Regular Daily Rhythm**

Re-establish a consistent daily schedule with specific times for meals, sleep, study, and activities.

### **Use Rituals**

Use simple rituals such as morning verses, songs, and prayer to provide a sense of security and guidance.

### **Prioritize Physical Balance**

Use rhythmic movement to help release the “**paralysis of shock.**” Avoid staying on screens for long periods, as screens suppress emotions rather than allowing them to be released.

Excessive screen exposure negatively affects children and increases levels of stress, anger, and aggressive behavior.

**Suggested activities:**

- Stomping feet
- Clapping
- Jumping rope
- Passing a ball

These activities help children reconnect with their bodies. If it is safe, families can go for a walk in nature or any available outdoor place, and maintain warm communication with the child.

## **Encourage Creative Expression**

Provide non-verbal outlets that help children process trauma.

**Tools may include:**

- Watercolor painting
- Clay or modeling dough

It is preferable to allow children to create freely and draw or shape whatever they wish, helping them express what they carry inside without judging whether the artwork is beautiful or not. Artistic expression allows children to communicate feelings that are difficult to express in words.

## **Create Safe Spaces**

Create organized physical spaces such as a **quiet corner** with blankets or silk scarves to provide children with a sense of privacy and protection.

## **Encourage Independence Through Meaningful Tasks**

Involve children in simple, age-appropriate household tasks, such as washing dishes or helping younger siblings. These activities help build self-confidence and a sense of responsibility.

## **Storytelling — Comforting Images**

Tell stories and fairy tales with clear and safe endings to counter the disturbing images of war. Stories restore order and allow fear to be released through imagination, helping children move through trauma. They nurture the child's inner light and balance images of war with images of peace and hope.

Families may create a beautiful storytelling environment at home, such as lighting a candle or singing a verse before the story, repeating it rhythmically and regularly when telling the story each day.

## **Limit Exposure to Media**

Protect children's senses by limiting exposure to news and frightening images.

## **Parental Self-Care**

A child's stability depends on the ability of adults to remain calm and balanced. Parents should find short moments of rest that can serve as a "**calm anchor.**"

Above all, **being present and expressing love** is essential. Even if our children already know that we love them, it is important to remind them and tell them often.

Love and the feeling of safety are among the most important anchors for the healthy growth and emotional balance of children who live in environments where war, emergencies, and constant change are part of daily life.

Wishing you well,

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## **Stories That Can Be Used During Emergencies, Crises, and War**

### **The Brave Little Lantern**

Long ago, a small lantern lived in a warm wooden cottage. Inside the lantern lived a small golden flame. One evening a cold, powerful wind began to blow. The trees trembled and the sky grew dark.

The little lantern felt very small and whispered,  
"How can I stay shining when the wind is blowing like this?"

But the flame remained calm. It knew that its glass walls were strong and clear.

The lantern moved to a quiet corner, held its breath, and waited. Even while the wind blew outside, the flame danced gently, spreading a warm golden circle of light on the ground. Soon a tired little bird followed the light and found a dry place to rest.

The lantern realized that no matter how strong the darkness becomes, **its small light is enough to guide the way.**

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## **The Girl with the Glass Lantern**

In a quiet valley like ours, a thick gray fog covered the land. It was so dense that the sun could not break through it, and everyone had to stay inside their homes to remain safe and dry. People felt a deep cold and began to worry that the light had forgotten them.

In a small house at the edge of the forest lived a young girl named **Elara**. She had a small glass lantern that her grandfather had given her. It had no battery and no electric plug. It would only shine when someone offered an act of kindness.

As the fog grew thicker, Elara felt a chill in her heart. But she remembered her neighbor, an elderly man who lived alone. She took a small piece of warm bread she had helped bake, wrapped it in cloth, and placed it on his doorstep. As she did this, a tiny spark — no larger than a grain of sand — began to glow inside her lantern.

Soon she saw others doing the same: a boy sharing his favorite book with his sister, a mother singing a gentle lullaby, a father repairing a broken toy. With every small act of kindness, more sparks appeared in Elara's lantern until its glass shone brightly enough to be seen through the thickest fog.

One by one, the neighbors lit their own lanterns from her light. They did not need the sun to guide them — they walked by the light they created together.

When the fog finally lifted, they realized something important:

They had not only been waiting for the light to return — **they had been lighting the valley all along.**

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