

TALKING TO CHILDREN ABOUT ONLINE ANTISEMITISM



Online antisemitism is growing, and it can be hard for parents to know how to help children face it. Kids today spend much of their time online—on social media, games, and videos—where they may come across hateful or harmful messages. They might see it by accident, hear it from others, or even be targeted themselves. Because online hate spreads quickly, children need adults who can help them understand what's happening, stay safe, and feel supported. This guide offers ideas and tips for families to talk openly and calmly about antisemitism online.



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Starting with General Conversations

Before talking specifically about antisemitism, it helps to know how to approach any sensitive subject with kids. Ask, Don't Lecture.

Create a Safe, Open Space

- **Be approachable:** Let your child know they can come to you with anything—no judgment, no punishment.
- **Listen fully:** Give them your full attention. Validate what they feel (“I can see that upset you”) and let them know it’s okay to have emotions.
- **Pick the right moment:** Talk when things are calm and private, not in the middle of stress or distraction.

Prepare Yourself

- **Stay grounded:** It’s natural to feel angry or sad, but take a moment to collect yourself first.
- **Learn a bit:** Have a basic understanding of antisemitism so you can answer questions simply and confidently.

Match the Talk to Their Age

- **Ages 3–5:** Keep it simple—talk about kindness, fairness, and respect. Reassure them that they’re safe and loved.
- **Ages 6–8:** Explain that sometimes people say hurtful things because they don’t understand. Focus on empathy and being kind to others.
- **Ages 9–12:** Talk about prejudice and stereotypes. Help them notice bias and how words can hurt.
- **Teens:** Explore deeper issues—history, media influence, and how hate spreads online. Encourage them to think critically and act responsibly.

Ask, Don't Lecture

Start by asking: “Have you seen or heard anything online that made you uncomfortable?” or “How did that make you feel?” This gives you insight into what they know and what worries them.

Be Honest and Reassuring

Give clear, age-appropriate facts. It’s fine to say, “I don’t know, but we can find out together.” Focus on reassurance: your child is safe, loved, and supported.

Keep Talking

These conversations shouldn’t happen just once. Check in often, especially when there’s something in the news or on social media.



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Talking About Online Antisemitism

You don't have to wait until your child brings it up. You might say: "I've seen some mean things online about Jewish people lately. Have you come across anything like that?" Use real-life moments or headlines to start the conversation naturally.

Explaining What Antisemitism Is

- **Younger kids:** "Antisemitism means being unkind to Jewish people just because they're Jewish. Everyone deserves to be treated fairly."
- **Older kids and teens:** Explain that antisemitism is a long-standing form of hate based on false stereotypes and conspiracy theories. Talk about how it can spread online through memes, videos, or comments that pretend to be jokes.

Helping Kids Spot Hate Online

- **Look for patterns:** Explain that antisemitism often repeats old myths—like blaming Jewish people for world problems or saying they control money or power.
- **Ask questions:** "Why do you think someone posted this?" or "What do you think they're trying to make people believe?"
- **Talk about hidden hate:** Some memes or jokes use symbols or coded language. Help older children recognize these signs.
- **Check the source:** Encourage them to pause before believing or sharing content.

What Kids Can Do

- **Stay safe:** Their safety and well-being come first.
- **Talk to an adult:** Encourage them to tell you, a teacher, or another trusted person about anything upsetting.
- **Don't respond or repost:** Even arguing or sharing hateful posts can spread them further.
- **Report and block:** Show your child how to use reporting tools on social media and games.
- **Be an "upstander":** If they see someone being targeted, they can offer private support, report the abuse, or stand with the victim—safely and respectfully.

Building Confidence and Resilience

- **Teach media smarts:** Help them think critically about what they see online.
- **Encourage empathy:** Talk about how words and images affect others.
- **Celebrate Jewish identity (if relevant):** Share stories of Jewish kindness, courage, and creativity to build pride and perspective.
- **Highlight allies:** Remind them that many people—Jewish and non-Jewish—are working together to fight hate.
- **Focus on hope:** Balance hard truths with examples of kindness and progress.



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Supporting Children Emotionally

Seeing or hearing hate can make kids feel scared, angry, or confused. They may act out, seem sad, or complain of headaches or stomachaches.

Here's how to help:

- **Acknowledge feelings:** "It's okay to feel upset or angry about this."
- **Reassure them:** Emphasize that they are safe and not alone.
- **Keep routines steady:** Predictability helps children feel secure.
- **Encourage positive outlets:** Art, sports, music, or time with friends can ease stress.
- **Model calm coping:** Show them healthy ways to deal with hard news.
- **Get extra help if needed:** If their distress lasts or interferes with school or sleep, reach out to a counselor or pediatrician.

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Key Reminders for Parents and Caregivers

Seeing or hearing hate can make kids feel scared, angry, or confused. They may act out, seem sad, or complain of headaches or stomachaches.

- Start early and keep the dialogue open.
- Stay informed and calm.
- Adjust your message to your child's age and maturity.
- Focus on empowerment, not fear.
- Use parental controls and monitoring tools as support, not surveillance.
- Reinforce values of empathy, courage, and community.
- Lead with hope—show that kindness and understanding are stronger than hate.

By keeping conversations open, honest, and loving, parents can help children feel secure and confident navigating the online world. When we teach them how to recognize and reject hate, we're helping raise a generation that values compassion, truth, and justice.