

## INTRODUCTION

Children with developmental disabilities face additional challenges during stressful situations that require immediate sheltering, loud alarms and significant changes in their daily routine.

## OBJECTIVES

The sudden and persistent trauma imposed upon civilian population in Israel required urgent adjustments and interventions to support parents to children with special needs.



Therapy in the bomb shelter

## METHODS

Specific interventions were designed to support parents using adapted behavioral strategies for specific challenges such as loud noises, running to shelter, familial stress, insecurity and non- predictable daily routines. The first and most important aid is to provide support to the parents and to empower them. Additional methods provided as group guidance to parents of children with special needs including autism:

### Coping Strategies:

- Teaching both parents and children breathing and exercise
- Quiet Spaces including sensory comforts
- Positive Reinforcement
- Repetition and Consistency including less predictable events
- Simple Instructions
- Sensory Comfort

### For children with motor difficulties:

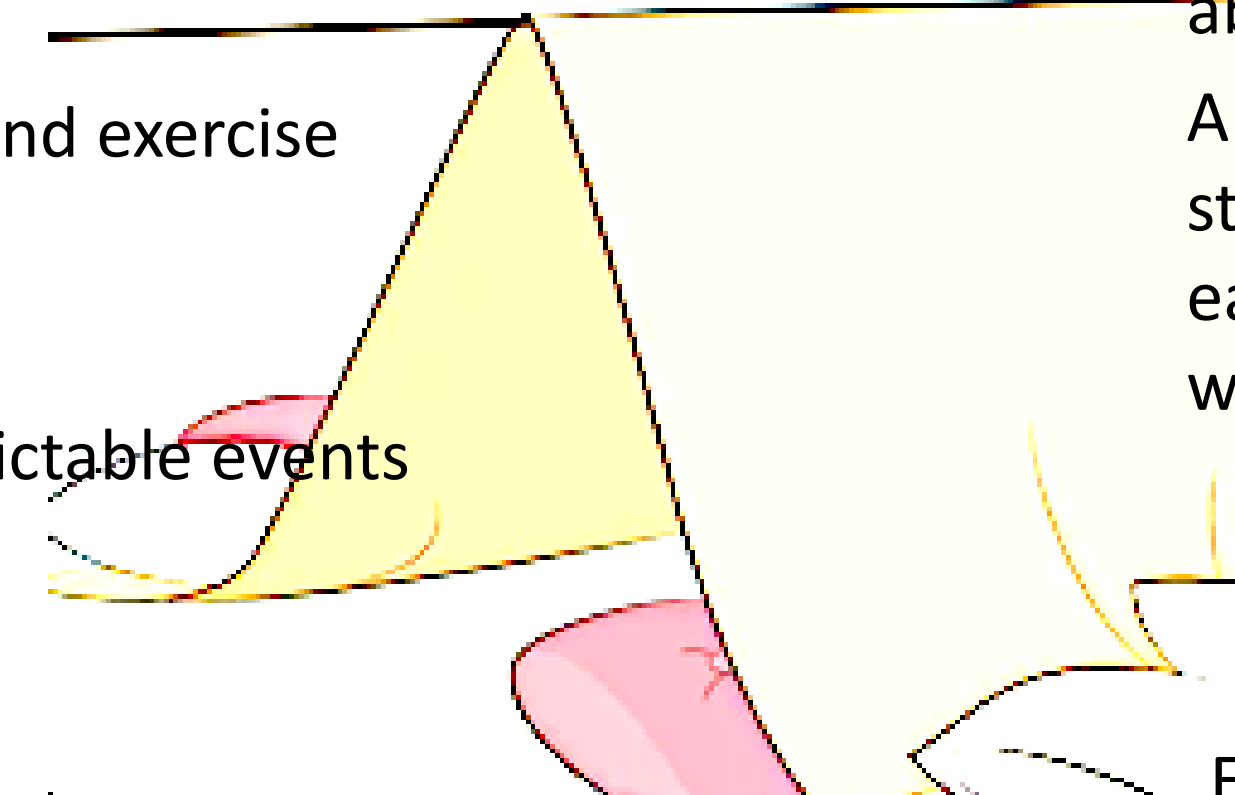
- Awareness and preparing the path
- Positioning, stretching and movement

### For young children and children with minimal verbal communication:

- Visual Supports like social stories
- Visual schedules, timers
- Social Stories



Visual cues: brushing teeth, breakfast, dressing



Building a "safe place" (tent)



Bottle of "feelings" that the kids can express with

## RESULTS

The intervention was provided to 50 parents in groups of 8-20 parents via webinar and group discussions.

The discussions evolved in peer to peer support in addition to implementation of above strategies.

All parents reported that at least 50% of strategies were satisfactory and helpful for each of the children including for siblings with typical development.

## CONCLUSIONS

Even during severe psychological trauma, implementation of coping and behavioral strategies empower parents, reduces stress and may improve resilience.

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