

1. What lies behind the question "What is normal in an abnormal situation," and why is it especially important now?

In an abnormal reality of prolonged war—sirens, running to shelters, and an emergency routine—behaviors that might be considered "inappropriate" or "incorrect" in normal times can actually be healthy responses to an irrational reality. We must interpret behavior and reactions in relation to ongoing toxic stress, rather than according to norms of peacetime. The underlying assumption is that children's emotional and behavioral development during emergencies differs from development in times of stability.

Children are exposed to deep disruptions and psychological and cognitive challenges. In this "abnormal" situation, responses such as developmental regression, learning difficulties, or behavioral changes are in fact natural neurological and physiological reactions to stress. Understanding this is critical now, as it allows educators to stop viewing regression as a "deficit" or a problem requiring unnecessary referral to special education, and instead to see it as insight into the child's current state, calling for support.

2. What does it mean to move from a "deficit" approach to an "abundance" approach in education?

The abundance approach, inspired by extrAbility, sees the whole person and focuses on abilities, skills, and competencies that have developed מתוך מוקד challenge, limitation, or difficulty. Instead of categorizing children by "problems" and "deficits," we ask: what strengths, knowledge, or sensitivities have emerged from this experience, and how can they be expanded for the benefit of the child and the community—so that difficulty becomes a source of resilience and creativity.

According to the "Essence of Learning" approach, this shift is reflected in a change of perspective: moving away from viewing regression and learning changes as a "deficit" requiring correction, toward understanding and adaptive support. Rather than focusing on what the child has lost or cannot do, the approach emphasizes the child's natural "abundance"—encouraging curiosity and imagination, מתוך אמונה that learning is an inner, natural process, and that teaching should be aligned with the child's actual developmental stage.

3. What is "toxic stress," and how does it manifest in children during prolonged emergency situations?

Ongoing toxic stress in wartime can appear in two seemingly opposite ways: a "pseudo-adult"—a child who appears overly mature and responsible beyond their age—and regression, such as bedwetting, increased clinginess, fears, or loss of previously acquired skills. Both responses are ways the psyche attempts to cope with emotional overload that exceeds developmental capacity.

Toxic stress is a state of intense, prolonged stress occurring without the presence of a protective, regulating adult. It becomes a persistent physiological response that disrupts brain development (particularly the limbic system and hippocampus). In prolonged emergencies, it may manifest as:

- **Regression and freezing:** returning to earlier developmental stages, reduced expression, or halted development
- **Cognitive difficulties:** forgetfulness, distractibility, difficulty sustaining attention or play
- **Emotional and physical changes:** anxiety, outbursts, aggression, extreme attachment, or alternatively withdrawal and excessive quietness; as well as headaches, stomachaches, and sleep or eating difficulties

4. How can educators recognize behavior as a call for help rather than a discipline problem?

To see behavior as a call for help, we must first observe without judgment: what exactly is happening, when, with whom, and what patterns repeat. From there, we try to understand the child's underlying need. Children communicate through play, silence, humor, aggression, or withdrawal—showing us what helps them and what they need.

It is important to look at the full 24-hour cycle and identify where the child feels most at ease and "at home," and begin from there. Understanding toxic stress helps educators realize that children under stress struggle with self-regulation because their stress system is constantly on alert. Behaviors like outbursts or restlessness are not necessarily discipline

issues, but direct outcomes of a brain scanning for threat. Recognizing this allows educators to respond with understanding and tailored support rather than punishment.

5. What makes an educational space one that enables healing—not just learning?

An educational space enables healing when every activity is meaningful: from simple tasks like cleaning and cooking, to play, crafts, and storytelling that nourish the soul. Learning is not merely content delivery but an integral part of the healing process, taking place within rhythms and small, consistent rituals that create predictability, a sense of control, and a feeling of "home" בתוך chaos.

Such a space is based on:

- **Safety and stability:** predictable routines and a calm, uncluttered environment
 - **Balanced stimulation:** engagement without overstimulation
 - **Support for self-regulation:** giving children tools to manage stress and emotions
 - **Learning as healing:** seeing learning as inherently restorative and meaningful
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6. What shift in mindset is required of educators to act מתוך resilience rather than burnout?

The key shift is like the "oxygen mask on a plane": educators must first care for themselves in order to support children. This includes tending to their own emotional world, drawing on personal beliefs, prayer, creativity, or simply breathing.

In addition, a deep connection to meaning and purpose is essential, alongside adopting a philosophy of resilience that sees the current difficulty not only as distress but also as an opportunity for growth and transformation. This perspective enables educators to rise above hardship and serve as a model of hope for the community.