

Operation "Roaring Lion" **Announcement from the Sunflower Resilience Center and Student Counseling Services**

Dear Students,

Following the outbreak of Operation "Roaring Lion," we would like to remind you that you are not alone.

Here are several points for coping and support:

1. **First – breathe.** Pause for a moment, look inward, and try to establish emotional and family stability as preparation for a period characterized by change and uncertainty.
2. **Practice sensitivity, flexibility, and tolerance** toward family members, colleagues, and especially toward yourselves. We will need our emotional resources in the coming period.
3. **Remember – you are not alone.** Our academic community is strong and supportive and knows how to provide care even in challenging moments. Together, we can maintain academic continuity while safeguarding personal and communal resilience.

If needed, you may seek emotional-support assistance from the following resources:

1. **NATAL – Israel Trauma and Resiliency Center (National Trauma Victims) – 24/7** hotline: 1-800-363-363, *3363 (English & Hebrew).
2. **Mental Health Support Hotline** – Anonymous emotional support and consultation from mental health professionals, including parental guidance. Messages can be left, and a response will be provided within 24 hours. Phone: 03-5318811
3. **Departmental Resilience Counselors** – Clinical psychology interns from the Student Counseling Services:
<https://sites.biu.ac.il/sunflower-center-academic-resiliency/page/4171>
4. **Sunflower Bot** – The virtual resilience counselor of the Sunflower Center:
<https://chatgpt.com/g/g-H10VWwRWL-khmny-h>
5. **"Ripples of Recovery" Initiative**, School of Social Work – Short-term couples intervention via Zoom (3–4 sessions) aimed at reducing distress related to the war. Contact: family.center@biu.ac.il
6. **"Family Journey" Program** – A joint initiative of Ripples of Recovery and the Community Service Clinic offering intervention for families with children and adolescents ages 3–15 coping with stress and distress related to recent events. Contact: family.center@biu.ac.il
7. **Creative Space for the Soul** – A weekly supportive Zoom space for creative expression and dialogue with members of the Bar-Ilan community, facilitated by Prof. Einat Metzel, Head of the Art Therapy Program, and students. Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, 8:00–9:00 PM. Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/2821042741>

Possible Emotional Reactions in the Coming Period

First, anxiety responses are a **normal reaction to an abnormal situation**. Although these reactions may be distressing and alarming, they typically subside once the threat is removed.

Distress responses may manifest in various ways and can be divided into three main categories:

Emotional reactions: fears and anxieties, sadness and low mood, frustration and anger.

Physical reactions: accelerated heartbeat, rapid breathing, excessive sweating, muscle tension, body tremors, diarrhea, frequent urination.

Psychosomatic responses may include headaches, bodily aches, loss of appetite, digestive problems, rashes, excessive fatigue, and insomnia.

Cognitive reactions: prolonged stress may lead to difficulties with attention, concentration, and confusion.

Research-Based Strategies for Reducing Anxiety

1. **Maintain daily routine:** Although crisis situations invite many changes, attempts to preserve routine can reduce anxiety and provide a sense of continuity, familiarity, and security—especially when involving active engagement and interpersonal interaction.
2. **Attend to basic needs:** Regular eating and drinking and maintaining sufficient sleep are essential. When these basic needs are unmet, psychological resilience is also weakened.
3. **Reduce exposure to threat cues:** It is recommended to rely on Israel's official alert system and respond to sirens according to Home Front Command instructions. At the same time, try to limit television viewing, news consumption (print and online), and the use of the "Red Alert" app. Information overload increases feelings of helplessness and repeatedly exposes us to events that have already occurred and ended.
4. **Make time for enjoyable activities:** In areas where normal activities can continue safely, it is advisable to do so. When possible, engage in safe, enjoyable activities (e.g., meeting a friend near home, phone conversations, watching a comedy).
5. **Relaxation and exercise:** During anxiety, the body produces physiological reactions that do not always subside once the threat passes. Relaxation and physical activity can help release tension and stimulate mood-enhancing hormones.
6. **Support:** Carrying anxiety alone is difficult, and sometimes the burden of loneliness is heavier than the anxiety itself. Seek out close individuals, share your concerns, listen to their feelings, and carry the emotional load together.

When Should You Seek Professional Help?

We have described common distress responses shared by many of us. However, you know yourselves best. If you feel you are struggling to cope with the emotional burden, this may be a good time to seek professional help.

Additionally, if the reactions mentioned above impair your daily functioning and disrupt your ability to actively participate in everyday tasks—such as inability to attend lectures, severe sleep disruption, persistent intrusive thoughts, or feelings of detachment from close others or from reality—it is advisable to seek professional assistance.

You may also contact Student Counseling Services at Finkel-Rachman Building (Building 407), phone 03-5318450, between 9:00 AM–3:00 PM to schedule an appointment with a member of the psychological staff. Sometimes even one or two sessions can significantly improve how we feel.

With hope for peaceful and safe days for us all,

The Sunflower Resilience Center and Student Counseling Services Team