INCIDENTS OF ANTISEMITISM CAN OCCUR AT UNEXPECTED MOMENTS AND OFTEN WHEN WE LEAST ANTICIPATE THEM. To experience hostility and discrimination from others because of religion, race, and/or ethnicity is traumatic for adults and children alike, and fear can make it hard to speak up and stand up for oneself. It’s a difficult topic to discuss, and for many of us, navigating this terrain feels daunting and explosive. How do we speak, whether in person or via social media, to family members, close friends, neighbors, acquaintances, and, most importantly, our children about such an ugly and painful subject? What is required for each of us to feel confident to enter this conversation and feel as if we are on sturdy ground?

To effectively combat antisemitism, it is important to understand what it is and its historical manifestations. Hatred toward Jews has transformed over time. It began as hatred toward Judaism, then morphed to focus on Jews as a people, and now it also includes hatred toward the Jewish state of Israel. It is incumbent upon each of us to understand these manifestations and to engage in meaningful discussion about the ways in which Jew hatred rears its ugly head. Creating opportunities to correct misinformation and ill-informed positions is the first step in the educational process.

I know that is not always easy, but the way in which we, as grown-ups, model combatting antisemitism for our children truly matters. They watch us and notice. Ask yourself: Did you shirk from responding to an antisemitic comment? Did you sidestep your way out of a confrontation? Our children pay close attention to see if we create brave spaces for difficult conversations. Part of the beauty of PJ Library is that it provides an opportunity for parents to read with their children from the safety of home about moments when Jews have faced intimidation, discrimination, and persecution. Through the process of reading, we can help our children understand what was, what is, and what remains. We can engage in developmentally appropriate discussions about what to do if we encounter hatred toward Jews in our own communities.

It is necessary to prepare our children for a future in which they will face hard moments, whether on social media or in real life; teaching them the lessons of history is a prerequisite to readiness. Antisemitism should not be socially acceptable, and we cannot tolerate it any more than we would other forms of bigotry and prejudice. Together, let’s choose to embrace opportunities to dismantle ignorance while encouraging difficult conversations.

Rachel Fish is the Founding Executive Director of the Foundation to Combat Anti-Semitism and leads the Together Beat Hate initiative. Together Beat Hate promotes sensitivity, awareness, and education about ethnic, racial, religious, sexual, gender, and cultural identities through collaborative community engagement and education, utilizing communication platforms that young people interact with most: the internet and social media. For more information about Together Beat Hate, visit togetherbeathate.org.