



# OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

Michal Silverstein, MS

## Parenting Through the Lazy Days of Summer

As school ends and summer begins, many parents start to panic, especially if they're parents of teens. When kids are little, keeping them occupied and knowing where they are is a lot less challenging. When it comes to teenagers and the summer, many parents are unsure of their role and how involved they should be in their day-to-day activities.

Although it's uncommon to find full-day summer camps in Israel for school-aged children that extend for the full two months, it's still important to schedule daily activities for them. There are a range of programs

and options to choose from. Here are a few suggestions.

A group of parents can form a joint summer camp and rotate running daily activities. Local community centers tend to offer art, sports and swimming camps for a few weeks. For very young children, many schools offer camps which extend a few weeks beyond the end of school year. And if you have a bunch of kids at home who are of similar ages, and you don't work, you may decide to do mommy camp for a few weeks. Whatever you choose to do, it's important to plan ahead. It's a good idea to split up the summer into segments, and that kids know what they will be doing during those times.

As children grow, many parents become less sure of their role in managing their teens' summers. They question how much freedom or guidance to provide alongside boundaries and control. Although summer vacation is a time when teens have freedom from school, parent involvement is still necessary when planning their

summers. With so much technology at their fingertips, it's more important than ever that teens engage in meaningful activities. This can mean going on day trips with friends, playing sports, volunteering, or working as a counselor or in a store. Here too, parents can help their teens split up their time throughout the

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summer between these different options. Summer vacation doesn't mean that parents should totally step back. Parenting responsibilities just change. You may not have to keep track of school events and academic demands, but you're still responsible for guiding your children and keeping them safe.

Summertime is an incredible time for your child to learn, grow and gain new life skills. It's an opportunity to build family relationships and make memories by going on a family trip. Use the summer to teach your teens to manage their time wisely and take advantage of their vacation. Values and basic responsibilities should continue throughout the summer. I'm not referring to having strict schedules, but if your child normally goes to minyan every day he should continue to do so in the summer. It's an opportunity for parents to show some flexibility and look for a later minyan, but it's important to model consistency and commitment even on vacation. This goes for household tasks as well. Some downtime is also healthy and can promote creativity.

It's a good idea to have a discussion with your teen about what they'd like to do in the summer and what goals they have set for themselves. They may want to work in order to earn money for driving lessons, or learn or perfect a new skill like horseback riding, swimming, or painting. Some teens may say they have no idea what they want to do or that they don't want to do anything. This doesn't get you off the hook. You may have to do research and make suggestions and give advice to your kids. Parenting in the summer requires effort and initiative. Teens that are left bored and entirely to their own devices, usually end up spending excessive time scrolling or gaming, which can be



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detrimental and unproductive.

Although Israeli kids have been through a lot this year, it's a disservice to leave them to make all their own decisions. Even if they seem to not want any input from parents, it's important to guide them. They don't know all the options available to them, and if they do, they lack skills to fully plan things alone. It's also important to be curious and still ask your teens who they will be going out with, how they plan on getting there and back and other details. They are almost adults but not just yet. It's also okay to loosely limit screen time on vacation in whatever way you normally set boundaries.

Summer is not a break from parenting. It's an opportunity to parent differently, by helping children to develop independence while knowing they still have guidance and support from their parents. When boundaries are set through discussion and genuine curiosity rather than judgment and control, teens are more likely to see them as an expression of care and concern. ■

Feel free to send in any **parenting questions** you may have to [parenting@ouisrael.org](mailto:parenting@ouisrael.org) (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).

**Michal Silverstein** has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.