



OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

Michal Silverstein, MS

Planting Seeds of Success

With the chagim behind us and school fully underway, it is a perfect time to focus on growth and goals for the coming year.

As children acclimate to a new school year, there are a lot of things they need to get used to. Many children have new teachers, new subjects, and new classmates. Some may have moved to a new school, where the unknown can feel even greater. How do you teach your children to have a positive attitude and accept their circumstances, even when they face challenges?

A great deal of a child's attitude is directly influenced by their parents' attitudes. Children tend to pick up on how their parents navigate challenges and frustrations, as well as how they respond to uncertainty and disappointment.

Modeling a behavior is one of the most effective ways to influence your children. Doing so requires one to look inward. In addition to modeling calmness and healthy

problem-solving skills, there are several ways parents can help their children make the most of the coming year.

1. LISTEN BEFORE YOU PROBLEM-SOLVE

If a child comes home and says, "I don't like my new teacher," or "Some of the kids in my class are annoying," what should your first response be?

The initial response should be to listen. It is important to hear what your child's experience at school is and allow them to express their frustrations and disappointments. Resist the urge to immediately problem-solve. Instead, take interest and ask questions. Be curious about what your child is experiencing.

Sometimes, children don't need parents to fix the situation, they simply need to feel heard and understood.

2. PROJECT CONFIDENCE IN YOUR CHILD

The next step is to communicate confidence that your child can navigate the challenge. Saying something like, "You don't have to love your teacher, but you do have to be respectful," sends an important message of both acceptance and empowerment.

Of course, when there is a genuine threat to a child's safety or well-being, a parent may need to step in and advocate for their child. But when it comes to the everyday frustrations of school, the more confidence you project in your children's ability to manage

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challenges, the more confident they will become.

Having an annoying child in your class or a teacher you don't connect with, may be frustrating, but learning to accept and navigate these situations helps children become flexible and develop stronger character. In order to truly grow, one needs to learn how to tolerate discomfort.

Try to avoid feeling sorry for your child when they encounter an imperfect situation. Instead, help them understand that not everything in life will go exactly as they planned. Learning to accept the class they've been assigned to and the teachers they've been given, can also be an opportunity to recognize Hashem's guiding hand in their lives.

3. CULTIVATE GRATITUDE

Especially at the beginning of a new year, teaching a child to be grateful is a skill that can foster lasting happiness in every area of life.

You can help your children shift their focus from what they wish were different to what they already have. What is going well? What can they appreciate? What are they grateful for?

As you enter this time of new beginnings, you can utilize the values that lie at the core of the chagim: reflection, acceptance, gratitude, and connection.

When you model these values yourself and teach your children to practice them, you give them more than tools to navigate the school year, you give them tools to navigate life.

Shana Tova ■

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

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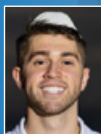
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