



Volume

1

**AUERBACH CENTRAL AGENCY  
FOR JEWISH EDUCATION**

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**A DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE FOR JEWISH PARENTS  
BASED ON**

*The Blessing of a Skinned Knee*  
by  
**Wendy Mogel, Ph.D.**

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# Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education

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The mission of the Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education (Auerbach CAJE) is to promote and support Jewish education for the purpose of developing and enhancing strong and positive Jewish identity, lifelong Jewish learning and commitment to and participation in the Jewish community in the United States, Israel and throughout the world. Providing vision, expertise and initiative, Auerbach CAJE is the central source for consultation, collaboration, training, programming, advocacy, research, planning, coordination, leadership and resources for professional and lay educators throughout the Greater Philadelphia Jewish community.

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Parenting Resources Available on the Website of the

Auerbach Central Agency for Jewish Education: [www.ajae.org](http://www.ajae.org)



# *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* Parent Discussion Group Guide

## Setting up a parent discussion group

Once, families received support from parents, aunts, uncles, and siblings. But now, geographically distanced from extended family, like-minded parents are organizing themselves into mutually supportive groups. Research conducted by educational consultant James B. Stenson found that “parents befriend other parents who share their basic values and their dedicated commitment as parents. They receive affirmation that as parents they are on the right track. This steered them to persevere through tangled times, no matter what.”

(<http://www.parentleadership.com/groups/html>)

Stenson’s research reveals that as families bond with others, they not only gain friends and a support system, but they develop a kinship much like those that are found in an extended family. Over the years, the synagogue community has also modeled the role of the extended family. The synagogue therefore becomes the ideal place to host Jewish parent discussion groups.

This Jewish parent discussion guide is one of a series of guides designed to support families. It is modeled after the parent discussion guide found at [www.wendymogel.com](http://www.wendymogel.com). Though the topics discussed apply to both male and female children, this guide uses the pronoun “he” to refer to the child in general.

## Parent Discussion Group Guidelines

**Size & Participants:** The group should have a minimum of six members, but no more than twenty. The ideal group size is ten to twelve members. Smaller groups limit discussion and may not be able to sustain themselves. In large groups, there may not be adequate time for all participants to speak.

**When & Where:** Groups should meet in a comfortable setting within the synagogue but can also function nicely in members' homes. Weekdays usually work best, but another good option is Shabbat. On Shabbat afternoon after services, young children can be monitored by older student volunteers while their parents meet. On Sunday morning, parents can meet while children are in religious school.

**Length & Frequency:** Allow ten minutes for arrivals. Groups should discuss how often they will meet and how long the sessions should last. The group should commit to sessions of between one and two hours.

There are several models groups can follow. One model is to meet once a week for six weeks. Some groups meet bi-weekly or monthly and continue their discussions for months or even years.

The group may or may not choose to designate a leader. If there is no on-going leader, each session should have someone who acts as the facilitator.

## Rules for Parenting Groups

During the first meeting, the group should decide whether or not a set of explicit guidelines is needed. Here are some rules adapted from the discussion guide on Wendy Mogel's website:

Establish and stick to the meeting times that the group sets.

Group sessions should not be taped.

Each group member must call if he is unable to attend and leave a message with the leader or a designated person.

Discussions should be limited to the topic of the day.

Comments should be phrased in positive terms. Opinions that diverge from one's own should be respected.

Parents should agree to keep confidential what is said in the group. Anything discussed in the group stays with the group.

Everyone should be encouraged to share only what he wishes to share. Members should refrain from pressuring anyone to reveal anything about his family if the person does not choose to share. If group members are responding to questions in turn, any member can decline by saying "I pass."

There are more questions provided than are needed for each session. Group leaders should select questions from this guide based on the interests of the group. During the first session, members should introduce themselves and explain why they joined the group.

## Insights from Wendy Mogel, Ph.D.

Many parents have similar dreams. They wish their children to be safe. They wish their children to grow up healthy and self-reliant. Many parents wish to see their children become optimistic and well-mannered in a world that is all too often hurried and impersonal. Dr. Mogel has isolated blessings, values and teachings from the Torah, Talmud and our great Jewish thinkers to help parents rethink how they are rearing their children.

Participants in a group should select the chapter(s) that they will focus on for each session and read them in advance of the meeting. Questions in this guide have been reformatted to support various stages of child development: early childhood, elementary, and adolescent. Some parents may prefer a group with others who have children of the same age.




From her wealth of experience, Dr. Mogel has conducted many Jewish parenting groups. Dr. Mogel's website guide offers this insight into the Jewish parenting group experience:

*“A good Jewish parenting class is profound but never solemn or staid. Pilpul (from the Hebrew, “pepper”) is a dialectical method of Talmudic study and debate, consisting of drawing out the broadest range of logical possibilities in the text. The purpose of pilpul is both to deepen the participants’ understanding of the applications of the law and to sharpen their wits. Disagreements, laughter, tragic stories, laughter, juicy stories, laughter, teasing and tenderness — a good Jewish parenting class is peppery.”*

*The Blessing of a Skinned Knee Parent Guide*, Dr. Wendy Mogel  
<http://www.wendymogel.com/testguide2.html>


## Using this Guide


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I C O N   K E Y	
	Before Reading Quote
	Reflection Activity
	Share the Moment
	Think About
	Make Connections
	<i>Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar</i>


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This parenting guide is divided into several sections. There is a “before” the discussion section, “during” the discussion section and a “follow-up” session. Groups may choose to use all or parts of the sections, as appropriate. While discussion questions are written for parents of early childhood, elementary or adolescent aged children, participants need not limit their discussion to the questions in one section but may opt to select questions of interest from each section. Questions from the participants may also be added. It is suggested that a copy of the guide be made for each member of the group and distributed before the first session.


 **Before Reading Quote:** A quote from *The Blessing of a Skinned Knee* or Jewish tradition that the reader may wish to reflect on before reading the session’s chapter(s).

 **Reflection Activity:** An activity designed to encompass the themes of the topic that will help parents discover their parenting style. Participants should think about this before the class meets.



 **Share the Moment:** An activity designed to facilitate discussions between parents and children in order to help parents see their parenting style from their child’s perspective.

 **Think About:** Questions to reflect on after reading the chapter.

 **Make Connections:** Extend the experience in the group by consulting friends and family for their insights. Parents may share these findings during a session.

 ***Middot, Mitzvot and Mussar:*** Jewish virtues, commandments and ethics that are introduced in the chapters.

## I C O N   K E Y

 Before Reading Quote Reflection Activity Share the Moment Think About Make Connections *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

## Realizing Potential – Chapters One and Two



*“Judaism shows us that we don’t have to be swallowed up by our frenzied materialistic world – we can take what is valued from it without being wholly consumed.”*

*(The Blessing of a Skinned Knee, Wendy Mogel, page 34)*



Look at a photo album from when you were your child’s age. Recall your natural childhood interests and passions. Think about how the expectations of your family and the environment helped these inclinations flourish or wither. If you don’t have a photo album, talk to one of your parents, a sibling, or another relative who remembers your childhood behavior. How do their reflections help refresh your memory?



After reviewing the album or your family memories, share these reflections with your child. What do you have in common with your child?



## FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

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- What do you have at home that enables your child to show his spirit in a natural, unhurried setting? If your child is a natural artist, for example, where in your home can he express his talents to draw, paint, or use clay? What other opportunities does he have to explore these talents?
- Think of the last activity in which you tried to involve your child and he was reluctant to participate. A pre-verbal child shows dislike in very distinct ways. What are the signals your child gives you to show that the activity you chose is not one for him? What do you do in response?
- Imagine this scenario: You are standing outside your child's early childhood classroom. Posted on the wall are this week's art creations. You immediately find your son's painting. A smile comes across your face because you love what he has designed. Then you look to the left and see another child's painting that has a more polished look. How do you feel? How do you react to your child?


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### ICON KEY


 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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## FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTARY YEARS

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- Think about your child's talents, inclinations and passions. How would you describe his nature? How is he like you or someone in your family? How is he different?
- What opportunities does he have to express his natural inclinations?
- If you notice telltale signs (bedwetting, fears, apathy, irritability, sleeplessness, nail-chewing, hair-pulling) that indicate that you may be pressuring your child to achieve, what do you do?


## FOCUSING ON THE ADOLESCENT YEARS


- Think about your child’s talents, inclinations, and passions. How would you describe his nature? An adolescent may already have a clear sense of his skills and passions or he may be dabbling in different areas to find his strengths or what excites him. How do you support him in allowing him to find and nurture his own potential?
- What opportunities does he have to express his natural inclinations? How do you help him find time in his busy schedule to express his talents?
- How do you handle any telltale signs (sleeplessness, withdrawal, depression) that indicate your child may feel pressured to achieve?
- Reflect on whether you are accepting "good enough" or looking for perfection from your child or from yourself as a parent. Are your expectations too high? For instance, are you disappointed or do you punish your teen for earning a “B” when you believe he could have received an “A”? How do you feel when your child is not “succeeding” in school?


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### ICON KEY

 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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


What strategies do you use to avoid competition with parents who seek attention for their children’s successes?



***Lishma*** means for its own sake. We are told to learn Torah for its own sake rather than use it to impress others. If we love our children “for their own sakes” versus loving them for their achievements, they will more likely reach their potential. Think ahead to the coming week. How will you show appreciation for your child’s natural self rather than just for his achievements?

***Mikdash Me’at*** is the term for both “place of worship” and the “Shabbat table.” Dr. Mogel notes how her family made their family table a holy place. What can you do to make your family meals a holy experience?

## Granting Freedom - Chapters Three and Four

I C O N   K E Y	
	Before Reading Quote
	Reflection Activity
	Share the Moment
	Think About
	Make Connections
	<i>Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar</i>



*“When a person honors parents,” God says, “it is as though I lived in the house and he honored Me.”*  
(Talmud, Kiddushin, 30b)



When you were growing-up, how did you address your parents and their friends? How did you address teachers? If you were required to be more formal than your children are, what were the advantages and disadvantages of this? How do you address these same people now that you are an adult?

Compare the negative forces that lurk outside your door today versus what you faced growing up. Given your child’s current level of freedom, what type of positive or negative experiences might he encounter?



How do you explain to your child the need for certain boundaries? Are some of these boundaries mutually agreed upon? Does he feel constrained? Does he appreciate these boundaries? What freedoms does he wish he had?



FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD, THE  
ELEMENTARY AND THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

- What opportunities do your children have to help you or others?
- What have you taught your children to do when ...
  - ◆ they need to interrupt when you are on the phone
  - ◆ they disagree with you in public
- How do your children see you treat your parents?

ICON KEY

Before Reading Quote

Reflection Activity

Share the Moment

Think About

Make Connections

*Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*



What strategies do your friends use for combating rude talk and entitlement? Share the consequences and rewards that have been effective. What methods have your friends found to encourage their children to take initiative in helping out at home? What creative ways have you and your friends found to give children freedom while still keeping them safe? How can the synagogue community help establish group norms for keeping children safe?



**The Fifth Commandment is “Honor Your Father and Mother.”** The sages advise us that parent-children struggles are not issues for parents of this generation alone. Our ancestors also dealt with parent-child issues. How do you make your parents feel honored? How does your child make you feel honored?

**Proverbs 22:6 teaches “Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.”** The way you train your child when he is young will determine his behavior as he grows. What are the attributes you want your child to have as he matures? How do we help a child facilitate that development?

**Tsimtsum** means contraction of divine energy. Originally, God filled the universe and in order for other things to exist, He had to contract Himself. Parents, too, must know when to “contract” themselves in order to give their children space to grow and develop. When are you too involved in your child’s life? How can you start to give him the space to grow?

## Giving and Receiving – Chapters Five and Six

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### ICON KEY



Before Reading Quote



Reflection Activity



Share the Moment



Think About



Make Connections



*Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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*“The Lord will give you abounding prosperity. . . .”*  
(Deuteronomy 28:11)



People often take for granted what they already have and want even more. Do you value what you have by saying various blessings and expressing gratitude? Were you taught to express gratitude and thanks through *berakhot* and giving to *tzedakah*? How else did you express gratitude?

What responsibilities did you have as a child? How did you help your parents in other ways? What did you learn from having these responsibilities? How does your child see you helping your family today? How do you involve your child in these tasks?

Was helping your parents, siblings and grandparents an automatic practice or did someone have to encourage you to help out?

Do you think you had too many possessions growing up? Do your children have too many? Do they value them and treat them with care? How do you train your children to appreciate what they have and treat them with care? Are your children willing to share their things? Does your family try to repair things before replacing them?



Have your child sort his personal items into two piles -- the items used frequently and the items that could be donated to others who have a greater need for them. Provide your child with the names and purposes of various *tzedakah* organizations that would take and distribute these things.

Describe how the organization assists the community and let your child select the recipient of the items he will donate.

Work out a schedule with your child for sorting his possessions. Have your child help you sort other items in the house and decide what could be donated to people in need.

Teach your children to appreciate all they have. There are *berakhot*, blessings, for food, new things, and witnessing something special, that can teach them to take notice of and value things, people and experiences.


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#### ICON KEY


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 Before Reading Quote


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 Reflection Activity

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 Share the Moment

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 Think About

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 Make Connections

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 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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#### FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

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- “Wants” versus “needs” are difficult concepts for a very young child. Often, as a child starts whining, parents have a tendency to give in to the whining rather than trying to redirect the behavior. What do you do when your child whines or cries in order to get what he wants?
- Children learn best when we, as parents, model acceptable behavior. How are you modeling the practice of giving or showing appreciation, showing respect for people and things, and giving *tzedakah*?
- A great way to model acts of kindness is to demonstrate for your child how you care for others. Over the last week, what random acts of kindness did you perform for family members or people in your neighborhood? Do you know and practice Jewish values such as: *hesed*, *tzedakah*, *bikkur holim* (visiting the sick), honoring your parents, *hashavat aveidah* (returning lost articles), *biddur p'nei zakein* (honoring the elderly). Additional examples of these values appear in the *Make Connections* part (page 13) of this section.

#### FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTARY YEARS

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- Make a list of those things you believe your child is entitled to and those that are privileges to be earned. Compare lists with other group members.
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- Does your family have a ritual for expressing gratitude through giving *tzedakah*?
- How do you let your child know what makes you feel grateful?
- Does your child know which *tzedakah* organization(s) you contribute to regularly? Does he know why you have chosen them? Do you bring your child with you when you do acts of *hesed*?
- What chores does your child do daily? Weekly?


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ICON KEY

 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

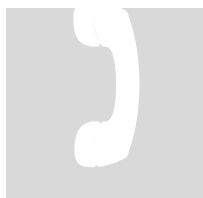
 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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FOCUSING ON THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

- Make a list of those things you believe your teen is entitled to and those things that are privileges to be earned. Compare your list with others in the group.
- Do you frequently lift your spirits by going shopping? How often do you buy something and then regret it or find you already have the same or a similar thing at home? Do you find your teens imitating this behavior?
- Does your teen know which *tzedakah* projects you are contributing to? Does he know why you have chosen them? Does he also contribute to a *tzedakah* project of his choice? Does he participate in *mitzvah* projects throughout the year through youth group, religious school or on his own? Does he understand the Jewish values inherent in *tzedakah* and *mitzvah*?
- What chores does your teen do daily? Weekly? Do you have a system in place with rewards and punishments?



What methods have your friends used to encourage their children to take the initiative to help out at home? Are their children completing chores? Which responsibilities might you institute in your family? How do the families find ways to have their children help out in the community?

Here is a selected list of mitzvot. Select one or two and discuss how you can introduce the obligation into your home.

*Bal Tashbit*  
*Bikkur Holim*  
*Hakhnasat Orhim*  
*Hashavat Aveidah*  
*Hiddur P'nei Zakein*  
*Kibbud Av Va'Em*

*Leshon HaRa*  
*Redifat Shalom/ Sh'lom Bayit*

*Shemirat HaGuf*  
*Tzedakah*


Not Destroying Needlessly  
Visiting the Sick  
Welcoming Guests  
Returning Lost Articles  
Respecting the Elderly  
Honoring One's Father and Mother  
[Do not] Gossip  
Seeking Peace / Peace in the Home-Family  
Guarding the Body  
[Pursuing] the Act of Righteous Giving


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
ICON KEY

 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*




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***Tza'ar gidul banim*** means the pain of raising children. When we become parents, we have an obligation to be supportive of our children and to teach and mentor them so they develop into sensitive, thoughtful, moral and independent individuals.

This obligation is difficult and the results, independent of our motivation and efforts, are, at times, painful for parents. How can we support each other in this difficult task – one for which we have not had the requisite experience and training?

## I C O N   K E Y

 Before Reading Quote Reflection Activity Share the Moment Think About Make Connections *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

## Developing Self Control – Chapter Eight



*“The Mitzvot were given to refine people.” (Bereshit Rabbah, 44:1)*



*Mitzvot* are the commandments of Jewish rules of behavior. How has the observance of *mitzvot*, (e.g., giving *tzedakah*, maintaining *kasbrut*, or observing Shabbat) helped you develop self-control? How might it help your child develop self control? How have your parenting techniques helped your child develop self-control?

Think about the ways your parents used discipline. Did they experiment with many different techniques? What aspects of their techniques of discipline were constructive and helped you develop self-control and a sense of security? Which aspects caused you to feel anxious or rejected? Which discipline strategies are you using with your child?



Ask your child to tell you how he feels about the rules and expectations you have for him. Emphasize that his opinions will help you reflect on your current parenting methods, noting that you want him to express his feelings freely without worrying about being punished for his openness.



## FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

- Every day your child is learning new ways to take control and show his independence. What is he doing independently that pleases you? Which things do you wish he would stop doing independently? How can you help him become more independent in areas in which he is too dependent?
- How many activities do you schedule for your child? How does your child handle unstructured time?
- In what ways are you helping your child develop a sense of routine? Are your expectations for your child's skills age appropriate? Does your child have enough independent play time or time to relax?
- Examine your discipline strategy. Think about whether you:
  - ◆ Are consistent
  - ◆ Make empty threats
  - ◆ Persist with an ineffective approach because it is comfortable
  - ◆ Agree with your spouse or partner on ways in which you discipline

### ICON KEY

Before Reading Quote

Reflection Activity

Share the moment

Think About

Make Connections

*Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

## FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTARY AND ADOLESCENT YEARS


- Think of your child's worst trait -- anything from an annoying habit or an attitude that has his teachers exasperated or deeply concerned. Now reframe it—think of this trait as your child's greatest strength. What are the good aspects of this trait? How can it benefit your teen now and in adulthood?
- Ask yourself which aspects of your teen's environment are obstacles to positive behavior. Does he have an overly busy schedule? Are there inappropriate expectations for school performance? Is he sleep deprived? Are his personal possessions and school supplies poorly organized? Does he lack time to relax? Does he have appropriate outlets for frustration and anxiety?
- Examine your discipline strategy. How do you handle small problems? Are you consistent? Do you threaten and not follow through? Do you feel your approach is effective or would you like to make changes?
- Many times discipline problems with teens are a result of their being overwhelmed when trying to deal with everything that is going on in their lives. How do you help your teen deal with stressful situations? Do you provide a


safe environment for your teen to speak with you without feeling judged? If he doesn't feel comfortable speaking to you, who else can your child turn to for support?


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ICON KEY

 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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What suggestions do friends and family have for consequences and rewards when your children show appropriate behaviors and attitudes?



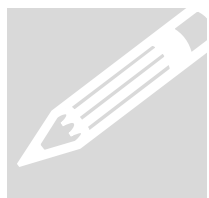
***Hiddur Mitzvot*** means to beautify the commandments. It is important not only to perform commandments, but to elevate them to a higher level. For example, family dinner can be hurried or made into a special experience. What family practices can you incorporate into meals to make them experiences of celebration and sanctification? It might be difficult to do this at every meal, but try this practice at the Shabbat table.

***Middot*** are positive character traits or virtues. Some examples of *middot* are: truthfulness, compassion, generosity, humility and modesty. We start to develop these *middot* at birth and continue throughout our entire lives. As we strive to direct our children towards positive character traits, think about what traits you would like to improve in yourself. How will you demonstrate to your children that you are making the attempt to develop specific *middot*?

## I C O N   K E Y

 Before Reading Quote Reflection Activity Share the Moment Think About Make Connections *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

## Food: Moderation, Celebration and Sanctification – Chapter Seven



“*You shall eat, you shall be satisfied and you shall bless.*” (Deuteronomy 8:10, also *Birkat HaMazon*.)



Think about celebrations you experienced with your family when you were a child. What do you remember about the meals and the gatherings? What foods were served? Where did you celebrate the holidays? How did these traditions change as you grew older? Which were the most meaningful to you? Which traditions from your childhood are still practiced today by your family?

How can you sanctify meal time? Do you include *HaMotzi* and *Birkat HaMazon* at family meals and family gatherings?



Which holiday meals and gatherings does your child like the most? Why? Which aspects of Jewish tradition do they look forward to repeating each year? What new traditions can you add to the next gathering?



## FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS

- Polite and healthy eating habits begin with good routines and good modeling. How does your family eat meals? Are you sitting at a table or in various places throughout the house? How often does the family eat together?
- Does everyone in the house help prepare for and/or clean up from meals? What tasks can you assign your child and at what age?
- Is your family in a “food rut”? Does everyone eat the same thing all the time? What food adventures are you willing to have together as a family?
- How do you introduce moderation and good eating habits to your young child?

### ICON KEY

Before Reading Quote

Reflection Activity

Share the Moment

Think About

Make Connections

*Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

## FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTARY AND THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

- Which of your poor eating habits do you see your child repeating?
- Does your child help to prepare meals? Are you teaching him how to cook?
- Are you concerned about your teen’s eating habits? Does he refuse food because he is “too fat”? Or, does your teen eat when he is stressed, sad or bored? Does he have a positive image of his own body? There is a Jewish value called *Shmirat HaGuf*, safeguarding the body. Do you feel that your teen is taking care of himself through healthy eating habits, exercise, and plenty of sleep?



What suggestions do your friends and family have for making meals an enjoyable and sanctified experience?




***Tzedakah at the table.*** *Mazon*, the Jewish food relief organization, recommends that you give three percent of your grocery budget to a *tzedakah* project that fights hunger. How can your children help your family practice this recommendation? How can you help your children think about how lucky they are to have a meal each night?


***Kashrut and Berakhot (Blessings).*** Families that observe *kashrut* follow the *mitzvah* of maintaining the dietary laws of the Torah. Our tradition encourages us to make our table a sacred place. How can your family make meals sacred experiences?


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ICON KEY


 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment




 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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## I C O N   K E Y

 Before Reading Quote Reflection Activity Share the Moment Think About Make Connections Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar

## Defining Child Rearing Goals – Chapters Nine and Ten



*"If you truly wish your children to study Torah, study it yourself in their presence. They will follow your example. Otherwise, they will not themselves study Torah, but will simply instruct their children to do so."* (Rabbi Menahem Mendel of Kotsk)



What do you think your parents' goals were for you? What are your goals for your child?



Does your child know what goals you have for him? What does he think of those goals? What goals does he have for himself?



## FOCUSING ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD YEARS


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- What are you doing to insure that your child will reach your mutual goals? How can you provide an environment that will make these goals attainable?
- In what ways do you model appropriate behavior for your child? How can you adjust the household activities to make certain that your home is the most nurturing place possible for you and your children?
- How do you help your child avoid the stresses of the adult world?
- What opportunities exist for your child to perform *mitzvot*? How do you incorporate what is modeled in the Jewish preschool or the Tot Shabbat services into routines for your home?
- What is the ideal social and religious community for your family?


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### ICON KEY

 Before Reading Quote

 Reflection Activity

 Share the Moment

 Think About

 Make Connections

 *Middot, Mitzvot, Mussar*

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## FOCUSING ON THE ELEMENTARY AND THE ADOLESCENT YEARS

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- What are you doing to help your child/teen reach the goals you have set and the goals they hope to reach? Are these goals realistic? What changes do you need to make in the environment and in the family in order to help your child reach these goals?
- In what ways do you model appropriate behavior for your child? How can you adjust household activities to make sure that your home is the most nurturing place for you and your child/teen?


- At home, do you stay connected to the office by keeping the computer, cell phone and beeper on through meals and family time or do you take the time to focus solely on your family? Could you and your child survive a "tech free" (no computer, no beeper or cell phone) day each week at home? What would be the benefits?
- Do you allow your teen the opportunity for self-reflection? Does he write in a personal journal? Listen to music? Write poetry?
- What aspects of the Jewish tradition do you want to transmit to your child/teen? How can your synagogue and your child's/teen's Jewish school help you transmit Jewish tradition?
- Which religious events do you share with your teen? Do you attend synagogue services together? Do you share holiday meals? Which Jewish adult education classes can you attend together? Do you participate in Jewish ritual events together?


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Staying attached to the “office” electronically might add more pressure to a relaxed family life. What methods can the group suggest for turning off the “office” when you get home?

What keeps families away from the synagogue? What experiences can the group suggest that would encourage greater involvement in the synagogue?



**Vayinafash** means (that God created the world and then) He rested. The root of the term *vayinafash* is *nefesh*, soul. Each week, God commands that we take time to renew our souls by setting aside one day to rest from our usual routines. What changes can you incorporate into your family schedule to provide time to rest and renew your soul on the Sabbath?

*Yisrael* means a person who struggles with God. How has your struggle with your religious self kept you from including religious observances in your family's life? Do your religious struggles have a negative or positive impact on your family?



## Conclusion

Parents have similar dreams. They wish their children to be safe. They wish their children to grow up healthy and self-reliant. They hope to raise optimistic and well-mannered children with good values.

We hope that this experience of sharing with other parents will help you see the value of Jewish tradition as a philosophy and springboard for positive Jewish parenting.

**May you and your children be blessed.**