



Prevention 101 **BACK TO SCHOOL** *& TISHREI*

Late Summer 2025 – Elul 5785



Conversations with Community Educators...

Father's Role in
Children's Chinuch

When Your Child Goes
Against Your Values

Kids at Simchas
Beis Hashoeva

Dealing with the
Stress of Homework

When Your Son Goes To
Mesivta for the First Time

Alcohol and Simchas
Torah... and Teens?

Make sure everyone in your family is registered to vote.

Page 31



NCFJE Executive Committee

Rabbi Sholom Ber Hecht
Chairman, Executive Committee

Rabbi Shea Hecht
Chairman of the Board, NCFJE

Rabbi Shimon Hecht
Executive Committee

Rabbi Shloma Leib Abramowitz
Executive Committee

Operation Survival

Rabbi Yaacov Behrman
Program Director

Miriam Simon
Assistant Program Director

Dena Gorkin
Director of Community Outreach

Shlomo Mahana
Prevention Educator

Leontine Thompson
Prevention Educator

Project Producer Devora Krasnianski

Wishing a complete and speedy recovery to Sholom Dovber ben Chava Hecht

N.C.F.J.E. / Operation Survival
824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213
www.operationsurvival.org
718-735-0200
info@operationsurvival.org

FOREWORD

My father, Rabbi Jacob J. Hecht, OBM, founded Operation Survival in 5748 (1988) to confront the growing wave of drug abuse infiltrating our communities. At that time, open discussions about addiction were rare, and many people doubted that substance abuse could pose a real threat to their own children.

Mr. Michael Behrman, OBM, was selected to develop and lead the program—a responsibility he fulfilled with dedication and distinction for nearly three decades, until his passing. Changing public perception about the dangers of addiction was a significant challenge. Boruch Hashem, in recent years, we have witnessed a marked increase in awareness, along with more individuals seeking mental health and addiction support.

At Operation Survival, we believe that **prevention is better than any cure**—and that equipping parents with the knowledge and tools to protect their children is one of the most powerful steps we can take. In recent years, we have launched the *Prevention 101* series and published two books offering parents practical, actionable guidance. This magazine is part of that ongoing effort—providing families with timely, relevant resources as they begin the new year.

I would like to extend a special thank you to **State Senator Zellnor Myrie** for being a steadfast friend to our organization over the years and for his unwavering support in advancing the *Prevention 101* initiative. His partnership has been invaluable in helping us further our mission.

This publication is the product of the dedication and professionalism of the Operation Survival team: Rabbi Yaacov Behrman, Miriam Simon, Dena Gorkin, Shlomo Mahana and Leontine Thompson.

We also extend our appreciation to the professionals we interviewed—Mrs. Dena Gorkin, Rabbi Aharon Wilschanski, and Mrs. Estee Lieblich—as well as to Mrs. Devora Krasnianski, who managed this project and brought it to fruition.

It is my hope that you will find this publication both informative and practical. Please know that our doors are always open should you or your family ever require our assistance.

Rabbi Shea Hecht
Chairman of the Board, N.C.F.J.E.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Conversations with Community Educators...

Parenting deeply impacts our today, our tomorrow, and the long-term future of our children. For this issue, we asked parents to submit common questions and posed them to three esteemed educators to gain their insight and expertise. Presented here are their thoughtful answers.

All the educators emphasized that their responses are not specific solutions tailored for your life, but rather general guidance and ideas to consider. This magazine is not intended as a substitute for the advice of mental health professionals.

School-Home Partnership

What To Share with the School	4
How Often To Communicate with the School	6
When You Don't Agree with a School Policy	7
When a School Rule is Difficult	9
Addressing Differences Between School and Home	10
When the Child Doesn't Like Their Teacher	11
Advocating for Your Child	12
Dealing with the Stress of Homework	13
When a Child 'Misbehaves' in School	15
Transitioning from Summer to School Mode	16
The Father's Role in His Children's Chinuch	18

Parenting Teens

Checking In Without Being Too Intrusive	19
How to Respond When Your Child Goes Against Your Values	20
Help! My Child is Rejecting Yiddishkeit	21
Creating a 'Family Culture'	22
When Your Son Goes to Mesivta for the First Time	23

Your Kids during Tishrei

Mesivta-Age Son Wants to Go to Crown Heights For Tishrei	27
Kids at Simchas Beis Hashoeva	28
Alcohol and Simchas Torah... and Teens?	29



Mrs. Dena Gorkin

Mrs. Dena Gorkin is the Director of Community Education at Operation Survival, and the founder and principal of Bnos Chomesh High School.



Rabbi Aharon Wilschanski

Rabbi Aharon Wilschanski serves as the principal of Cheder Lubavitch of Morristown for the past 15 years and has been actively involved in Chinuch for nearly two decades.



Mrs. Estee Lieblich

Estee Lieblich is an early childhood consultant, parenting coach and temperament specialist.

SCHOOL AND HOME PARTNERSHIP



What does an effective school-parent relationship look like?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

The partnership between parents and schools is foundational—not just for a child’s educational success but for their overall well-being. As both an educator and parent, I truly feel for both sides.

Sometimes we think of parents and schools as separate, even opposing, entities. But the truth is, we are one cooperative team working toward the same goal: raising the next generation. We are in this together. In my school, when we work with parents for the benefit of their child, we name the WhatsApp group between school staff and parents “Team Chanie” or “Team Rivky” — something that highlights the collaboration—because that’s exactly what it is.

When both parents and educators see themselves as collaborators rather than adversaries, it creates a strong, unified support system for the child. This partnership is not just about sharing information or coordinating logistics; *it is about aligning values, expectations, and strategies to nurture the child’s academic, social, emotional, and spiritual growth.*

A child is not a separate person in school and at home, though she may exhibit different behavior in these two places. When parents and educators work hand in hand, they can tackle challenges more effectively, celebrate successes more meaningfully, and provide consistent guidance that helps the child thrive both at home and at school.



How do I find a balance between transparency and privacy? How much does the school need to know about what is happening at home? And what is important for parents to share?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

One of the key elements of an effective parent-school partnership is **open and honest communication**. And yes—it is a

balance. Parents should aim to put their child’s best foot forward with the school, while also sharing relevant information about their child’s needs, challenges, and strengths. Schools, in turn, should be clear about their expectations, policies, and observations.

This exchange of information ensures both sides are aware of factors that might impact a child’s learning or behavior. For example, if a child is experiencing a significant change at home or has a medical condition,

informing the school enables teachers and staff to provide appropriate support and accommodations.

The general rule of thumb, in an easy-to-remember rhyme, is:

If it could cause your child to fail, be absent, or be late

Make sure that you communicate.

Medical issues—such as seizures, panic attacks, or serious allergies—should always be shared. Withholding this type of information can unintentionally harm your child, other children, or even staff members. In general, you can share on a need-to-know basis. Often, you do not need to give specifics to the school—unless the details are essential to keeping your child safe or providing proper support.

You might say to a teacher: “We have a situation at home right now that I am not at liberty to share, but I want you to know it is affecting my daughter emotionally. She may be extra weepy, need some downtime, or not be able to complete assignments. Thank you for understanding.”

Share anything that could impact learning or social functioning, such as:

- Sensory issues or learning differences
- Situations that may cause frequent absences or tardiness
- Medical or emotional concerns that require attention during the school day

Whenever possible, communicate with a **point person**—someone who has the authority and ability to follow through on what your child needs. And more importantly, someone you feel safe and can trust with this information.

Mutual Respect and Trust

Parents and educators each bring unique expertise. Parents know their child’s

personality, history, and home life. Educators bring professional insight into learning and development. Trust is built when both sides show reliability, maintain confidentiality, and demonstrate a genuine commitment to the child’s best interests - without judgment.

Collaboration and Flexibility

Challenges will arise—academic struggles, behavioral issues, or disagreements about policies. When parents and schools approach these as a team, they can brainstorm solutions and share responsibility for carrying them out. For example, if a child is struggling to focus, parents and teachers can develop strategies that are reinforced at home and school.

Keep the Focus on the Child

The ultimate goal is the child’s growth and happiness. This means setting aside personal grievances or institutional pride and prioritizing what is best for the child. Sometimes that requires difficult conversations or a compromise—but keeping the child at the center guides wise decision-making and fosters a supportive environment.

The partnership between parents and schools works best when there is effective communication, mutual respect, trust, collaboration, a child-centered focus, and shared celebrations.

“

WHEN PARENTS AND SCHOOLS WORK TOGETHER, CHILDREN ARE FAR MORE LIKELY TO THRIVE ACADEMICALLY, SOCIALLY, AND EMOTIONALLY.”

Communication with the School

“
COMMUNICATION
LEADS TO SUCCESS,
TRANSPARENCY,
CLARITY,
EVERYTHING
THAT WE FIND
SUCCESSFUL.
THERE'S NEVER
TOO MUCH
COMMUNICATION.”



How often should parents communicate with the school?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

I always emphasize the importance of a true partnership between parents and the school. Open communication leads to better outcomes. The more informed parents are about their child's experience, the more they can support success.

I recommend that parents check in with teachers or the school administration at least once a month—or at a minimum, every two months. Some schools send out regular updates, but nothing replaces a one-on-one conversation for getting a clear sense of how your child is doing. Find out the school's or teacher's preferred method—whether phone, email, or in-person—and use that.

Both parents should take a proactive role in communicating with the school; do not wait for the school to reach out. Reaching out early and regularly helps to catch small issues before they become bigger ones. While principals are involved, it's often the teacher who has the most direct day-to-day interaction with the child, so it is usually best to start with them.

The goal is to strike a healthy balance—staying involved while

giving your child the space to grow and develop independence. Regular, supportive communication with both your child and the school helps ensure a smoother transition and continued growth.

Communication should be proactive, not just reactive. Do not wait until there is a problem to make contact. Even when things are going well, regular check-ins help strengthen the relationship with the school and keep you informed.

Positive feedback is just as important as voicing concerns. When parents share appreciation for the work teachers and staff are doing, it fosters goodwill and supports the child's development.

Incidentally, the Rebbe once wrote in a letter about how important it is for educators to keep a warm, close relationship with the parents of their students, because this partnership greatly strengthens their positive influence on the children. We can do our part by fostering and supporting this connection.

Ultimately, the partnership between home and school is essential for your child's growth and well-being. By staying engaged, communicating openly, and working together, you give your child the best possible foundation to thrive.

When We Disagree With School Policy

“
BY WITHHOLDING
JUDGMENT, YOU
MODEL EMOTIONAL
REGULATION AND
CREATE A SECURE
AND NURTURING
ENVIRONMENT
FOR THEM TO TALK
OPENLY.”



What can I do when I disagree with the teacher's approach to discipline or with a school policy?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

Disagreements between parents and schools are almost inevitable, given the complex and emotionally charged nature of education. When a parent feels a teacher's decision, policy, or disciplinary action is unfair, the key is to respond thoughtfully and constructively.

Regulate Yourself First

My first rule of thumb: do **not** react in front of your child. Before responding, regulate your own emotions. Try a somatic practice like deep breathing or grounding. Talk it out with a neutral third party, such as a friend or mashpia.

Reacting in anger or frustration towards a staff member, especially in front of your child, can escalate the situation further and undermine your ability to advocate effectively. Children often find it harder to share what is going on for them if they expect that their parents will have big reactions themselves. You can try telling your child, “I need time to process

this,” or “I want to give this some serious thought.” This not only prevents impulsive reactions but also models a mature, thoughtful way to handle disappointment.

Listen Without Taking Sides

When your child comes home upset, take a neutral stance at first. Just listen and validate: “Wow, that sounds so upsetting.” Avoid jumping to take the side of the school or your child before hearing the full story.

Remember—children view events through a limited lens. Their emotional reaction is based on their perception, which may not reflect the full context. They are processing it based on limited life experience and incomplete information.

By withholding judgment, you model emotional regulation and create a secure and nurturing environment where they can talk openly.

(Corollary: do not let children read parents' WhatsApp chats or similar. They don't need to be exposed to parents' behind-the-scenes opinions about school policies.)

Gather the Facts and Approach Respectfully

Once you have calmed down and understand the situation, decide whether it is worth raising it with the school. If you choose to do so, use the school's preferred communication channel, which is usually email.

My father had a rule I call the **ABC rule: Always Be Cordial**. Even if you are upset, stay polite. Anger only puts people on the defensive and closes doors to resolution. Always write clearly and respectfully. If you are unsure about your tone, have a neutral third party review your email. Reviewing your intended speech before communicating your grievance with the school will help you deliver your message effectively.

Keep your purpose in mind: Are you venting, or are you trying to create a solution? The goal is to open dialogue, not to attack or blame. School leaders and staff members always remember the parent who approaches a problem politely and are quicker to communicate with and be open to that parent in the future.

When Change is Not Possible, Accept

Not every disagreement will end in your favor. When the school cannot or will not accommodate your request, your role shifts to helping your child navigate the situation with dignity.

Help your child (and yourself) remember that life is not always

fair; it is about accepting what Hashem has in mind for you. Sometimes, the purpose of a situation is that Hashem is giving us an opportunity to learn how to deal with difficult people and remain composed while growing from the experience. Celebrate with your child when they handle the situation gracefully. It is ok to tell a child: "This may not be the year you learn the most Chumash; but it can be the year you learn how to interact with a difficult person successfully."

Help Your Child Avoid a Victim Mindset

Children benefit greatly from seeing that you "went to bat" for them, even if the outcome was not what they had hoped for. You can say, "We did what we could. Now let's go forward and deal with this the best we can." This helps them feel supported while also learning resilience.

Throughout the process of working with the school, keep your relationship with the teacher and school cordial and cooperative. Avoid public confrontations, gossip, or involving your child in adult disputes. Avoid bad-mouthing the school or the teacher to or in front of your child. Your ongoing partnership with the school directly impacts your child's long-term success.

By handling disagreements with grace and professionalism, you model a powerful example for your children and help foster a positive school community.



WHEN THE SCHOOL CANNOT OR WILL NOT ACCOMMODATE YOUR REQUEST, YOUR ROLE SHIFTS TO HELPING YOUR CHILD NAVIGATE THE SITUATION WITH DIGNITY."

When a School Rule is Difficult

“
ENCOURAGE YOUR
CHILD—AND
YOURSELF—TO
BE CURIOUS ABOUT
THE REASONS
BEHIND THE
SCHOOL RULES
BEFORE DISMISSING
THEM.”



What should I do if my child finds a school rule difficult?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

The reality is that every environment—whether it is school, airports, or roads—has its own set of rules, both spoken and unspoken rules of conduct. To succeed in life, we often need to follow these rules, even if they feel difficult or do not align with our personal opinions. Children have a lot to gain learning this important fact of life. It does not matter whether we agree with the rule or not; if it is a school rule, it must be respected and followed.

In reality, most school rules are based on thoughtful reasoning. Encourage your child—and yourself—to be curious about the reasons behind the school rules before dismissing them. Sometimes, learning the backstory offers new insights or helps you appreciate the rule's purpose. You might even find ways to integrate some of these lessons into your own life. Even if you still disagree, this process helps clarify your values.

As a parent, if you disagree with a rule, avoid sharing those objections with your child. It is important to distinguish between

standing firm in your family's values and criticizing the school. You can uphold your beliefs without disparaging the school or its authority. For example, your family might prioritize healthier eating than what the school offers or follow different minhagim. When talking with your child, emphasize your family's values without undermining the school's rules or those who enforce them. Explain that following school rules is crucial for success in that environment, while maintaining your family's priorities at home.

This is also a valuable opportunity to teach your child an important life lesson: People have different priorities and place value on different things. Your child will encounter many situations where other people's values differ from their own, and learning to navigate these differences is essential. There are times to follow the rules, times to be open and curious about other perspectives, and times to simply accept differences between each other.

Encourage your child to be confident in your family's values while respecting the school's environment. Help them feel secure in their own perspective without disparaging others.



As a parent, how can I help my children navigate situations where school rules or practices differ from the values or practices in our home?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

If the school has a practice or a rule that is different from what we do at home, I explain to my kids that these are the school rules, and these are our family's rules. For example, the school brings in or allows candies or sugar-laden donuts. When my children were young, I had very clear rules about food—no foods with additives, no caffeine. And if we were going somewhere, I would bring snacks I was comfortable with.

One day, my son, then in second grade, came home and reported that there had been a birthday party at school. He told me the

birthday boy gave each child in the class a can of Coke, and he did not take one because he is not allowed to drink it. I was impressed that he took my rule seriously enough that he was able to resist the peer pressure even when he could have “gotten away with it”. In response to his actions, I took all of my kids out for a treat,



IT IS IMPORTANT TO SPEAK TO YOUR OWN RAV OR MASHPIA TO DISCUSS HOW TO HANDLE THE SITUATION FOR THE BEST OUTCOME FOR YOUR CHILD.”

showing them that when they stick to their principles, it benefits everyone.

And yes, sometimes, kids will “cheat” and eat candy at school even if we don't allow it at home. That is okay. It is even a healthy testing of the boundaries. Encountering moral dilemmas and learning how to make decisions that are good for them are part of growing up.

This is a challenge that many Shluchim face. Very often, their local school standards do not match the Lubavitcher frumkeit standards. In these cases, parents tell their children things like “yes, it is kosher, but it is not our kosher. You are in this school as a shliach, to set an example of what it means to strive for more in our observance.”

When we send our children to a Lubavitcher school that has Rabbanim and Chassidishe Mashpiim, we have to be a lot more cautious about how we approach these situations. School leaders consult regularly with the Rabbanim who guide them. When situations arise where you feel the school, or a particular teacher, is overly stringent or is not stringent enough, it is important to speak to your own Rav or Mashpia to discuss how to handle the situation for the best outcome for your child.

I have personally witnessed situations where a parent is overly zealous about a school rule, whether feeling that the reading material was too secular or the uniform shirt buttons were too far apart. I have also witnessed parents attack school administrators and teachers over information that was taught that did not meet their higher standards. These conflicts do not evoke goodwill from the school, nor do they bring about the desired result for the children. It can create embarrassment for the children, and ultimately a discomfort with the very standards these parents are trying to uphold.

On the other hand, when the school is stricter than the home, it is not something one can just ignore. In these situations as well, it is important for parents to consult their own Rav or Mashpia. If the contradiction between the two is causing your child distress, it has to be dealt with on an individual basis. Some children do not have the tolerance or the flexibility to handle the difference in standards, and in these cases, a change in the

family practices might be considered. In other cases, a parent can say, “These are the school rules, and this is what we do at home.” As long as “what we do at home” adheres to Halacha, most children can be comfortable with the disparity in standards. Communities are made up of many different types of families, each with its own family culture, and that is part of what makes it an interesting place to live.



What should I do when my child doesn't like their teacher or is struggling with the classroom environment?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

When a child comes home unhappy with their teacher, the most important thing parents can do is offer support. Effective support has two elements: validating the child’s feelings and empowering them that they can get through this successfully.

First, listen attentively and acknowledge that what they are going through is difficult. This helps your child feel seen and understood, laying the foundation for further support.

If you stop there and only validate without the next step of empowering them, your child may stay stuck in their negative feelings. If you only try to empower them without acknowledging their struggle, they may feel dismissed. Combining both acknowledgement and empowerment is key. This might sound like: “I know school has been hard lately! The start of the school year can be a hard adjustment. I also know that you have what it takes to get through this.”

THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEACH YOUR CHILD EMPOWERMENT TECHNIQUES.

This is an opportunity to teach your child empowerment techniques. Help them see the whole picture. There may be aspects of the teacher they do not like or do not connect with (yet)—but it is unlikely everything is bad. Children (and adults!) sometimes lump everything into one “all bad” bucket instead of recognizing that it is possible to dislike some things and still appreciate others. Sometimes, children need reminders that it is possible to feel two things at once—such as liking some parts and disliking others, or feeling scared and brave simultaneously. This balanced perspective fosters resilience.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO FOCUS ON WHAT IS WORKING, NOT JUST WHAT ISN'T.

Encourage your child to focus on what is working, not just what is not. Maybe the teacher tells great stories, or your child enjoys certain parts of the day. Sitting down together to list positives and negatives can

help them realize there is good too. For some children, creating a written list together feels easier than having a full-on “gratitude talk.” They can help decide what goes on the list, and then have something tangible to look back on later. This “unlumping” tool is very empowering in the moment and an important life skill.

Also, teach your child that they don’t have to love every aspect of an experience for it to be overall good enough. For example, just because the teacher did not teach math the way your child expected, it does not mean the entire day or school year is ruined.

Another helpful empowerment tool is a simple ritual before leaving for school. For instance, you can encourage your child to put a coin in the pushka each morning with the intention of having a good day. If a child is feeling anxious about a test that day or a substitute teacher, they can add a perek of Tehillim with a specific ask from Hashem for success. This small act can provide a sense of empowerment and positive intention as they face challenges

ahead. It is a tangible way to empower them and set a hopeful tone for the day.

And another one: celebrating small victories. When your child endures a tough stretch, say, “*Wow, that was a hard week—we made it through!*”

But be cautious about offering too many accommodations out of sympathy. While it is natural to want to help, ask yourself: Are these accommodations helping your child move forward, or keeping them stuck?

If the situation does not improve and is significantly impacting your child, it may be necessary to advocate on their behalf with the school. Begin by communicating respectfully with the teacher, and if needed, you can take it a step further and bring it to the principal. Remember, your role is both to advocate for your child and to help them develop the tools to handle adversity in the future.

Ultimately, the goal is to validate, empower, and support your child, helping them navigate difficult situations with confidence and resilience.



How do I know when I should be advocating for my child at school, and how should I do it?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

It is your job, as the parent, to advocate for your child—no one else will do it for them. Nowadays, schools are generally more open to hearing from parents than they were in the past. Do not hesitate to raise concerns that affect your child. Even if schools or teachers sometimes seem reluctant to hear from parents, that does not change your responsibility.

Always stay positive, solution-focused, and constructive in your approach. If something

is not right, start by reaching out to the teacher respectfully and constructively. If that does not resolve the issue, reach out to the principal.

However, being an advocate does not mean shielding your child from every challenge. Your role as a parent is to support and validate their feelings while also empowering them to handle difficult situations. You want to help your child develop the tools and confidence to face adversity—not just remove every obstacle.

So, listen, support, and stand up for your child when necessary—but always with respect, positivity, and the goal of helping them grow through their experiences.

Dealing with the Stress of Homework

Q:

What is the best way for parents to approach homework, and how can we manage the stress it sometimes brings into the home?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

I am happy to see that schools are reducing the amount of homework. Homework is a perennial topic for parents, and there is no one-size-fits-all answer.

When homework becomes a consistent source of stress in the home, it is okay to step back. Let home be a safe haven—do not let school stress invade your family space. A tense homework routine day after day can disrupt the peace we try to create in our homes.

The first step is to honestly assess what homework is doing—for your child and your family. Is it building skills and responsibility, or is it creating daily conflict? If you can handle homework with your child, go for it. But if it is causing stress in your home or your relationship, it is not worth it. Remember: you are not obligated to bring school stress into your home.

If your child is motivated and homework fits easily into your routine—wonderful. But if it's a nightly struggle, do not hesitate to set boundaries. You can respectfully say to the teacher: "I understand homework is important, but for reasons A, B, and C, we are not able to prioritize it right now. Please keep me informed if my child falls behind so we can find other solutions." This isn't

about avoiding responsibility; it is about protecting your family's well-being.

Keep in mind: some teachers may not fully grasp how much homework can impact home life—especially if they are not parents themselves yet. A mature, experienced teacher will likely understand if you communicate openly and respectfully.

Also consider the long-term impact: if homework causes constant family tension, your child may start to associate school—and even learning itself—with stress and negativity. If your child is already having a hard time at school or with a particular teacher, bringing that stress home can feel like bringing the teacher into your living room. It is simply not worth damaging the parent-child relationship, especially at a time when your child needs all the support they can get from you.

On the other hand, if your child wants to do their homework and feels good about it, that changes the conversation. In that case, support and encouragement are very appropriate.

Should I Remind My Child to do Their Homework?

Homework is ultimately the child's responsibility. It is often more effective to let the natural consequences of missed homework—like feedback from a teacher—do the teaching, rather than turning the parent into the "enforcer."

“

LET HOME BE A SAFE HAVEN—DO NOT LET SCHOOL STRESS INVADE YOUR FAMILY SPACE.”

If reminders become constant, parents can slip into the “nagging and annoying” role—at which point, the child may start tuning you out. The danger is that they stop hearing the important messages too.

Instead, put the ball in their court and try a collaborative approach. Sit down with your child and discuss how homework will work in your home. You might say: “Homework helps you review what you learned, and your teacher designed it with that in mind. How can we make this work so you are getting it done, and I am not constantly reminding you?”

You might make an agreement: “I’ll remind you once when it is time, and again in five minutes if needed—but after that it’s up to you”. If they manage their homework independently, even most of the time, consider offering a small reward. These kinds of conversations build ownership and reduce power struggles—without sending the message that homework is not important.

Final Thought:

The goal is not to be hands-off—it is to be intentional. Support your child, but do not let homework dominate your relationship. If your child is motivated, they will handle it. If not, let school consequences take the lead. Your relationship and your home atmosphere are most important!

Golden Nuggets & Practical Tips

- If homework is causing stress, it is not worth it. Protect your relationship with your child.
- Do not be afraid to communicate with teachers—most will understand if you are honest about your limits.
- Avoid becoming the “nagging parent.” Set clear boundaries: one or two reminders, then step back.
- Let home be a safe haven. School stress should not spill over into family life.
- If you need to, hire a tutor or ask an older sibling for help, rather than letting homework disrupt your evenings.



Should fathers be involved in daily homework?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

Many schools are moving toward minimal or no homework at all. Every family is different—sometimes the mother takes the lead with homework, sometimes the father. If a father has the time and ability, helping with

homework can be a great opportunity to bond and stay informed about what the child is learning.

Even if he can’t be involved with the homework daily, a father can still schedule time to learn with his children—on Shabbos, for example. Attending school events like Avos Ubonim or other programs is also a powerful way to stay involved. Every bit of presence and attention counts

When a Child 'Misbehaves' in School



How should I respond at home when a child misbehaves in school?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

I have seen many parents develop rifts in their relationships with their children because they let school issues spill over into family life. If your child has a conflict with a teacher or is experiencing stress at school, do not let that interfere with your relationship. When your child tells you what happened at school, the most important thing is to avoid reacting emotionally or negatively. If you do, your child will simply stop telling you what's going on.

Children are very smart; they know not to share with someone who can not handle what they are saying. If we want our children to communicate openly with us, we have to learn to bite our tongues and just listen. It is not about what to say—it is about what not to say. Just be present and receive whatever they are sharing. It is not a teachable moment right then; at that time, your job is to listen.

Later in the day, when you are both feeling calm and connected, you can revisit the topic. If you feel you need to respond, do it then. For example, you might say, "Remember what we talked about earlier today? I know that was a very difficult situation for you." Ask questions like, "How can I help you? What could the school do differently? What can you do differently?" This is also the time to gently share your perspective and give clear, confident direction that can be helpful to them in navigating the current situation, as well as similar situations in the future. Children gain tremendously by us sharing our values and perspectives with them. So long as it is done when they are open to receiving it.

If the school calls you before your child tells you about an incident, do not bring it up as soon as the child comes home from school.

Be honest that you know about it, but again, just listen to their perspective. When a child is overwhelmed by emotion, they are not receptive to lessons or advice. If you try to teach in that moment, it only activates their ego and defensiveness, making them hold on more tightly to their perspective.

Our best bet is to listen and let them know we were told about the incident, but to keep our response neutral. Later, when things are calm, you can discuss what happened and share your thoughts. It is okay to let your child know if something was disrespectful or not in line with your family's values, but do it in a safe, supportive moment.

Ultimately, the goal is to keep the lines of communication open and to make home a safe haven, not an extension of school discipline. This approach helps your child feel supported and understood,

and it preserves your relationship even when school is challenging.

The goal is for children to feel comfortable turning to their parents when they are faced with a challenge. The more we learn to listen, the more they learn they can share openly with us.



THE GOAL IS FOR CHILDREN TO FEEL COMFORTABLE COMING TO THEIR PARENTS WHEN THEY ARE FACED WITH A CHALLENGE."

Transitioning from Summer to School Mode

“

THE GOAL IS NOT TO IMPOSE A RIGID, MINUTE-BY-MINUTE PLAN, BUT TO CREATE ENOUGH STRUCTURE TO GIVE EVERYONE A SENSE OF SECURITY AND PREDICTABILITY.”



How can I help the family transition from summer freedom to school mode?

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

Transitioning from the relaxed pace of summer to the more structured demands of the school year can be challenging for both children and parents. Summer often allows for spontaneity—late bedtimes, flexible mealtimes, and slower mornings—while the school year requires a sharper rhythm. Helping the whole family ease into this new routine can make the change smoother and less stressful for everyone.

The goal is not to impose a rigid, minute-by-minute plan, but to create enough structure to give everyone a sense of security and predictability. While much of real life happens in the moment and can not be planned for, the more you can prepare in advance, the fewer last-minute pressures you will face.

Most of the school-year schedule will be fixed—wake-up times, breakfast, school—but you can build in flexibility where possible, such as after-school activities or homework timing. Letting children

have a say in these flexible parts, like choosing when to do homework, gives them a sense of ownership and control. A great way to do this is by having a brief “mini-meeting” (see sidebar) to talk through upcoming changes and agree on a plan together.

Make the Schedule Visible.

Simply saying the schedule out loud is not always enough. Children often lack the internal structure that adults have, so visual reminders are more effective. Predictable schedules give a sense of safety and security to children. Post the schedule on the wall where everyone can see it, and make multiple copies so each child has their own. Just like the posted daily routine in a preschool classroom, this helps kids know what to expect.

What are the signs that my child is having a harder-than-usual time transitioning from summer to school, and how should I respond?

Signs that a child is struggling with the transition from summer to school include more frequent

meltdowns, tantrums, increased demands, a generally worse mood, and more fighting with siblings. Essentially, everything gets heightened during this period. This can happen again after the Tishrei Yomim Tovim. It is important to recognize that these reactions are normal and to be expected.

Mini-Meetings.

Modeling how you plan and adjust a schedule can be a valuable life skill for your children. Before a change—such as starting the school year or going away for Shabbat—have short, casual “mini-meetings.” Serve a snack, talk about what is coming up, and make sure everyone is on the same page. For example, you might say: “So-and-so invited us for Shabbos, and we would love to go, but we are wondering if it might be too stressful with the way bedtime’s been lately. What do you think?”

For older kids, a mini-meeting before a trip or vacation can be a chance to highlight that a good attitude conveys gratitude: noticing the good parts of an experience can make the trip feel more enjoyable for everyone, and if things do not go exactly the way you want—like who you are sitting next to in the car or which bedroom you sleep in—keeping it from becoming a big deal is another way to show gratitude to your parents.

These conversations reduce anxiety, set clear expectations, and help transitions go more smoothly. You can also use them to make “shared game plans” for upcoming activities so everyone feels included in the process.

Normalizing the experience can take a lot of the stress out of it for both parents and children. Instead of thinking, “What kind of mother am I? What is wrong with this child? This only happens in our house,” realize that these behaviors are a typical response to change and disruption in routine.

When you take the judgment out of the situation and expect some turbulence, it becomes easier to handle. For example, if you keep your children up late for family events or travel, you can expect more tantrums and meltdowns. These are natural consequences of the fun and disruption that come with vacations and holidays.

Rather than blaming yourself or your child, accept that this is part of the process. If you are willing to let your kids have those late nights and special experiences of Tishrei, understand that some challenging behavior will follow. It’s all okay—it’s your choice as a parent, and it comes with the territory.

Don’t flip the situation on your young child or guilt them for their behavior. Don’t say, “After all the great times we gave you, you are doing this to us...” Instead, remind yourself and your child that transitions take time. It may take a week or so to get back into a normal schedule, and that is to be expected. The adjustment period will settle down on its own.

However, if things do not improve after a reasonable amount of time, it may be a sign of a deeper issue that needs to be addressed separately.

“
WHEN YOU TAKE
THE JUDGMENT OUT
OF THE SITUATION
AND EXPECT SOME
TURBULENCE, IT
BECOMES EASIER TO
HANDLE.”

The Father's Role in his Children's Chinuch



What is a father's role in his children's education, and how can fathers be more involved, especially as their children grow older?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

A father's role in his child's education is extremely significant. While mothers often take the lead—especially when children are younger—fathers have a unique and powerful influence, particularly as children grow older.

In my experience as a principal, most school communication goes through the mother, but I always encourage fathers to be actively involved. A unified approach from both parents sends a strong message to the child—and the school—that education is a shared family priority, that both parents are invested.

Fathers should also be visible partners to the school. Even if the mother handles most of the communication, a father's occasional check-in, presence at a parent-teacher conference, or note of appreciation makes a real difference. Sometimes there's a different tone or type of conversation that a father can offer, and that matters too.

If the mother is already handling a particular issue, there is usually no need for the father to call separately. They can discuss it together as a couple and decide the best approach. For larger matters, it is usually best for both parents to speak to the school at the same time, whether in person or by phone. This avoids the confusion of "broken telephone"

and ensures everyone is on the same page. It is also important that the parents speak to the child with one clear and united voice. Sometimes, a school representative—like a principal, teacher, or counselor—can help the parents reach that unified voice more effectively than they might on their own.

Fathers can be involved in many simple, meaningful ways: asking their children about school, showing interest in their learning, or spending quality time together. Not every child wants to talk right after school, but relaxed moments—like a trip for a treat, a quiet Shabbos walk, or during an intimate learning session—can open the door to deeper conversation. Recognizing even small accomplishments goes a long way in building a child's confidence.

As children reach adolescence, the father's role often becomes more pronounced—especially with sons. Around puberty, fathers tend to take the lead in certain conversations with their sons, just as mothers often do with daughters. This isn't a rigid rule, but it's healthy for children to feel they can turn to the parent of the same gender for guidance during this stage.

Most importantly, fathers should work on being approachable and emotionally available. Children need to feel they can come to their father not only with school matters, but with anything on their mind. That sense of trust and openness is built over time, through small interactions and consistent care.



THE MORE THE FATHER HAS A ROLE, THE BETTER.”

PARENTING TEENAGERS



What is a healthy way for parents to check in with their teenagers without being too intrusive?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

This is a delicate balance. Teens are developing their independence at this point, but we still want to help them make good decisions for themselves or with them. And, we just want to be in their lives and show how much we love and care for them.

I have found that with teenagers, the words I choose to use matter. For example, I learned not to say “I am proud of you” because it puts my emotions and judgment on them, and that can feel uncomfortable, especially for teenage boys. Instead, I say things like “I am impressed” or I just describe the behavior: “That seems to have been a sensible thing to do,” or “Looks like you made a good decision there.” It’s better to talk about what they did, rather than how I feel about it, because teens are already dealing with a lot of their own emotions; they don’t necessarily want to take on other people’s emotions, good or bad. When you describe their actions, it helps the kids recognize the strengths they have: I am sensible. I am responsible. I make good decisions.

When something happens and I am not so impressed, I try to describe the situation and ask, “What did you think was going to happen when you did that?” or “What was your thought process?” Tone matters here - a lot. I want to help them learn the skill of thinking things through, even in retrospect. I want them to think about the future and what they might do differently, but I try not to put my emotions on them.

If I sense something is up but I don’t know what, I will pick up on little clues—maybe a word, a name, or a time—and I will say, “Tell me about Motzei Shabbos.” Most of the time, they will be surprised I know something happened, but I tell them, “If it happened, and even one other person was present, it has a chance to get back to me.” I follow the breadcrumb trail, watching their reactions, and try to pick up on what’s really going on. It is less important to get all the facts than it is to help my child understand what they did and what they could have done differently.

It is important to create an environment where kids know they can talk to us. That trust starts when they are very young, by reacting calmly and showing them that nothing is too big or too scary for us to handle. I tell them, “There’s nothing so big or so scary or so

embarrassing that I can not hold it with you.” That way, as they grow into teenagers, they know I’m their safe adult. I’m the person they will come to when they inevitably mess up.

If I fly off the handle or dump my emotions on them, they will not come to me when something goes wrong. They will go to their

friends or someone else who they think can handle it. That might not be a safe person, and it definitely will not be someone who loves or cares for them more than I do. So, I work on being emotionally regulated myself, so my kids feel safe coming to me, even with the hard stuff.



How do I respond when my child does something ‘stupid’ or against our values, or just disappoints or frustrates me?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

First, let me share what not to say: avoid phrases like “How dare you do that to our family name,” or “Not under my roof.” Anything that even sounds like the child no longer belongs in the family unit is dangerous territory. You’ve just opened a door for your child to take their first step out. Often, what they’re doing is testing if you’ll open that door or hold your family close in a loving environment, no matter what.

There is nothing more grounding and safe for a child than their family. Families are a critical protective factor that helps keep kids safe and guides them away from the many risky things the world offers. It’s not a guarantee—but it’s the strongest protection there is.

Yes, it is frustrating and scary when your child is acting out or making risky choices. Maybe you do not know where she is late at night, and you are tearing your hair out. But here is the truth: your job is not to “fix” your child. Your child’s job is to grow into the person they are meant to be—and your role is to be the parent who always welcomes them in, creating a safe

emotional space they want to come toward.

Recognize that Hashem charted a path for your child that includes you. How do you want to be part of that path? It might not look like the family you dreamed of, and it will not always be easy—but you are growing as a parent and as a person. The children who challenge us the most are the ones Hashem gave us specifically to help us grow into our best selves. Sometimes that means learning new parenting skills and mindsets tailored to this particular child. Sometimes it means learning how to just listen.

Your goal is to create an atmosphere where your child feels your love and protection, no matter what they are doing. Sometimes that even means making surprising choices—like inviting your



**RECOGNIZE THAT
HASHEM CHARTED
A PATH FOR
YOUR CHILD THAT
INCLUDES YOU. HOW
DO YOU WANT TO BE
PART OF THAT PATH?”**

daughter's boyfriend into your home—because deep down you know if you do not, she will find a way to see him regardless, and you risk losing any supervision at all, along with your relationship and connection with her. If she is playing in dangerous waters, she may truly need you when things go awry, and you need to have that close (enough) relationship.

So ask yourself: do you want to be part of pushing her out the door, or part of the warm, supportive hug that keeps her close?

We say every day, “המכין מצעדי גבר” — “Who prepares the steps of mankind.” Hashem prepared your child's steps as well. You did not decide this path, but you were given the sacred and awesome responsibility to support it in the best way you can.



Help! My child is rejecting Yiddishkeit.

MRS. DENA GORKIN

This is a tough situation that many parents face today. If we want to bring our children back to Hashem and our values, we must recognize that the path back is through trusted adults in our children's lives—especially parents. You can inspire and encourage, or even try to convince or force,



IF THE CHILD FEELS LOVED BY THEIR PARENTS, THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO COME BACK. IF THEY FEEL BROKEN BY THEIR PARENTS, IT'S MUCH LESS LIKELY.”

but nobody benefits from being pressured in their Avodas Hashem. The connection with you is their connection with Hashem—you're the conduit. Keeping that connection strong is a protective factor and gives you your best hope that someday they will reconnect spiritually as well. If the child feels loved by their parents, they have

a chance to come back. If they feel broken by their parents, it's much less likely. So your work at this point is to focus on being the connection and strive to keep that relationship strong, no matter what.

It may be hard to watch your child turn their back on what you value deeply. There may be some ego in there, too—thinking maybe this child somehow reflects on you or your parenting. The Rebbe was once asked: “How can kids from good families go off the path? Is it not true that the apple does not fall far from the tree?”

He replied, “Yes, but when there are strong winds, the apple can be blown far from the tree.” So we do our best to counter those winds. The best way is to be loving and warm—and also set standards. But when a child is struggling, your job is simply to love, not necessarily to push those standards, because pushing usually does not lead toward the standards. I see parents with children who come to family events dressed however they want, and the parents do not bat an eyelash. Maybe in private, they are crying—but when it comes to the relationship, there is nothing more important than showing love and acceptance.

Parenting kids today is an incredibly challenging job. It is holy and special. I always daven for strength for all parents to do their very best for each child, in the way that the child needs.

Setting Your Family Culture



I have been hearing about ‘family culture’. What is it all about, and why does it matter?

MRS. DENA GORKIN

If we want our children to *want* to be close to the family, we have to intentionally create an atmosphere of warmth and love that keeps drawing them in. It is about the little things you do together—inside jokes, trips now and then, shared privileges, working side-by-side in the kitchen, or a Motzei Shabbos where everyone plays music and sings together. It is about what happens around your Shabbos or Yom Tov table. It is about singing the Pesach songs from your family’s traditions. There have to be special moments that make being part of your family something your kids would choose over spending time with friends.

Even small rituals matter—a cousin once noticed that after we bench licht, I hug my daughter and kiss her forehead. She was so touched by this scene and commented to me on how special it was to observe. I had always done this and never gave it a second thought, but her words made me realize: That’s a special minhag for us. These little things are not really little; they shape our family’s identity, our family culture.

These things do not just happen by accident. It is important to think carefully about our family culture—who we want to be and what kind of family we want to be—and to build meaningful rituals and experiences intentionally.

Sometimes we have to adjust traditions as the family changes.

As the kids get older, we try to include them in decisions and traditions to make them

feel part of the experience. If a child wants a quick Shabbos meal instead of a long one, sometimes we do that. For Yom Tov, each child might choose a theme for a meal, giving them ownership and making it more fun. Maybe there are fewer guests. The key is tuning in to who the kids are *right now* and adapting as needed. Teenagers might want to participate less or spend Yom Tov away for the first time. That is normal, even if it is disappointing to us. I try to listen and not get stuck on “this is how we always did it.” What worked before might not work now—and that is okay. I have to pick my battles and remember it is not about doing everything exactly the way it was done before. As long as my children are healthy and safe, that’s what truly matters.

We try to understand what makes each child want to be at the Shabbos table, and I am willing to change things to make that happen. Even if they want to drop some family rituals or traditions as they grow, that is okay. If we need to spend a little more money or time to accommodate a specific request, we try to make that happen.

The goal is to make the family a place where the kids want to be, creating an atmosphere that draws them in. It is all about keeping our family close.



THERE HAVE TO BE SPECIAL MOMENTS THAT MAKE BEING PART OF YOUR FAMILY SOMETHING YOUR KIDS WOULD CHOOSE OVER SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS.”

Preparing for Mesivta

“
TRANSITIONS
IN GENERAL
CAN BE VERY
DIFFICULT
FOR ANYONE,
BUT IT'S ALSO
IMPORTANT
TO KNOW
THAT IT'S VERY
NORMAL.”



How can I best prepare my children—and myself—for big transitions, like going away to yeshiva for the first time?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

Transitions can be challenging, for both children and parents, but they are also a completely normal part of life. When a child is getting ready to leave home for yeshiva or enter a new environment, it is natural for both the child and the parents to feel some anxiety. The key is to recognize that this is a normal part of the process. Don't mistake typical transition anxiety for something more serious, like clinical anxiety, which involves more intense symptoms and may require professional help.

Parents should talk openly with their child about what to expect. Let them know that it is normal to feel nervous or even a little scared, and that these feelings usually pass as they adjust. Sharing your own experiences with transitions can also help normalize what they are feeling. The more a

child knows that these emotions are common, the less likely they are to feel isolated or “different”, the more manageable the experience becomes.

If your child has a history of anxiety or is showing signs of physical discomfort, like trembling, chest pain, nausea, headaches, sweating, or sleep troubles, it is important to address those concerns early. In such cases, do not hesitate to seek guidance from a professional. But for most children, simply knowing that anxiety is normal, knowing what to expect, and having someone to talk to makes a significant difference.

If your son is showing anxiety even before leaving, gently ask him what is on his mind. Identify his main concerns and help him think through some strategies or small adjustments that might ease the transition. These conversations are valuable and should happen before he takes off for such a major milestone like leaving home for yeshiva for the first time.

It is also important to equip your child with practical tools for coping

with this new stage and in life in general. As mentioned, one of the most helpful things you can do is simply normalizing anxiety during transitions—just knowing that it is expected can make it easier to face. Encourage healthy distractions like music, reading, games, or learning something new. Remind them that the teachers and staff are there to support them, and that they can always reach out to you if they need support. A strong foundation of trust between you and your child before he leaves goes a long way.

Parents should also prepare themselves for the adjustment period. It's normal to hear complaints or worries from your child in the first weeks. Unless there are serious concerns about safety or well-being, try to let the adjustment process unfold naturally and give it time. Most children settle in and thrive once they get past the initial hurdles.

Ultimately, the best thing parents can do is to be supportive, patient, and communicative—both with their child and with each other. Both parents presenting a united, calm approach helps the child feel secure and confident as they take this important step.

MRS. ESTEE LIEBLICH

Transitioning to a new school, especially for the first time, can be a huge adjustment for both children and parents. It is important to recognize that feelings of homesickness, anxiety, sadness, or overwhelm are completely normal during this period. As a parent, being prepared for this transition—and reminding yourself and your child that it is a normal and expected reaction to this big change in life—can make a significant difference in how you both cope.

One of the most helpful things you can do is to normalize the experience. Let your child know that it is okay to feel out of place or to miss home. Share with them that these feelings are temporary and that, with time, things will settle down. When children understand that their emotions are normal, it can help them feel less alone and more empowered to get through the tough days.

It can be helpful to view your role as that of a supportive coach for your teen: validate their experience and also give them empowering messages that they have what it takes to get through it.

When your child comes home during school breaks and then returns to school, you might notice some regression or renewed anxiety. Remind yourself and your child that this is a common pattern and that they have successfully adjusted to new things before. Reassure them that, just like last time, they will soon feel comfortable again.

Finally, keep the lines of communication open. Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and listen without immediately trying to fix things. Sometimes, just knowing that their parent understands and supports them is enough to help a child through the transition. By approaching the process with patience, empathy, and reassurance, you can help your child build resilience and confidence in facing new challenges.

“
SOMETIMES, JUST
KNOWING THAT
THEIR PARENT
UNDERSTANDS AND
SUPPORTS THEM IS
ENOUGH TO HELP
A CHILD THROUGH
THE TRANSITION.”

“
MORE IMPORTANT
THAN THE EXACT
FREQUENCY IS THAT
THE COMMUNICATION IS
SUPPORTIVE AND HELPS
THE CHILD ADJUST.”



How often should my husband and I communicate with our children who are away?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

That is a great question, and one that many parents wonder about—especially when their child is away from home for the first time. A lot depends on the family dynamics, the boy's personality and maturity, and whether this is his first time away or not.

In general, it is common—especially at the beginning—for a child to speak with his parents two or three times a week. Many families check in after Shabbos, before Shabbos, and once in the middle of the week. Every family is different, and some children

may want to call every other day at first, which is also completely normal.

Even if a child is calling daily, parents can gently encourage growing independence by keeping the calls brief or slowly spacing them out. As the child settles in, the need for frequent calls usually lessens—often dropping to once or twice a week.

It is also important for parents to check in if they have not heard from their child, especially before Shabbos or Yom Tov. A full week should not go by without any communication. Sometimes, a short message from a parent—“Just thinking of you”—can mean a great deal to a child adjusting to a new setting.



How should I go about communication with an out-of-town Yeshiva? What should these conversations include? And should I share about sensitive topics like diagnoses, medication, or personal habits?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

That is an important question, and one that comes up often. As I said before, communication leads to your child's success. I believe it is always important to be honest with your child's teachers or dorm counselors—whether it's about a diagnosis, a concern, or anything that will help your child

be successful in school. Sometimes parents worry that sharing information, like a child's ADHD or medication, might lead to stigma or rejection. But in my experience, transparency is almost always in the child's best interest. (And by the way, I strongly believe that ADHD children and people, for that matter, are some of the most talented people out there.)

When educators are aware of a child's needs, they can provide the appropriate support and accommodations. For example, some of us learn and do better with auditory styles, others with visual or kinesthetic; there are so many different types. Sharing that information helps everyone. The goal is to set your child up for success, not to hide or withhold details that could make a difference.

It is appropriate for parents to ask what tools or supports are in place to help their child thrive. You can discuss how your child learns best, any specific needs or preferences, and what the daily routines look like. When it comes to dorm life, it is also helpful to ask about supervision, schedules, and how challenges are handled.

Of course, privacy is important, and not every detail needs to be shared. But when it comes to things that could impact your child's well-being or success, open communication is key. The more honest and collaborative you are with the school, the better the outcome for your child.

Remember, you are not just advocating for your own child—open, honest communication can improve the environment for all students. When parents and educators work together, everyone benefits.

Ultimately, do not be afraid to ask questions or share concerns. Teachers and counselors want to help, and the more they know, the more effective they can be in supporting your child.

“

WHEN PARENTS
AND EDUCATORS
WORK TOGETHER,
EVERYONE
BENEFITS.”



What are red flags to look out for in the first weeks and months of my son going away for mesivta?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

If you notice your son's academic performance, grades, or attendance are declining, or if he shows a lack of engagement, motivation, or enthusiasm, these can be early warning signs that something is wrong. A sudden withdrawal from communication—especially if your child is usually talkative and social—or a reluctance to talk about school may indicate distress, anxiety, or even bullying.

It is important to pay attention to major changes in your child's behavior, even if some children are naturally less communicative.

While it can be harder to pick up on these signs when your child is away from home, maintaining open lines of communication with your child and their teachers or school staff increases your awareness and ability to intervene early if needed.

“

IF YOU SENSE FEAR IN
YOUR CHILD'S VOICE
OR NOTICE THEY ARE
AVOIDING CERTAIN
TOPICS, THESE ARE
DEFINITE RED FLAGS.”

YOUR KIDS DURING TISHREI



My mesivta-age son wants to go to Crown Heights for Tishrei. Is this a good idea?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

That is a very important question—and one that every parent should consider carefully before agreeing to their teenage son going to Crown Heights for “Tishrei with the Rebbe.”

This experience can be incredibly meaningful for a young bochur’s spiritual growth, and it often includes many exciting and inspiring moments. At the same time, there are plenty of distractions. Some boys may struggle with the excitement, with navigating the environment, or even with knowing what to do and when.

So the answer is: **You have to know your child.**

Going on his own—not as part of a structured program—is highly discouraged. There is simply too much going on, too little structure or accountability, and at this stage, most boys do not yet have the tools (or the practice using them) to fully navigate the experience in a meaningful way.

A bochur needs structure. If he is joining a **well-developed program**—with clear

structure, daily schedules, good supervision, and accountability—and if he is in the right mindset, this can be a beautiful and uplifting experience.

So, how can you tell if he is ready?

From an **emotional maturity standpoint**, look for signs that your son can manage and express his emotions when faced with challenges. Has he shown the ability to adjust to new environments or routines? How does he handle social dynamics? Would he reach out for help if he needed it? Can he balance different responsibilities with some level of self-awareness? If your son has shown resilience, self-awareness, and the ability to handle stress or disappointment in the past, these are strong indicators of readiness.

Spiritual readiness is just as important. Is he genuinely interested in the purpose of the trip? Is he motivated to grow spiritually, to participate in learning, and to engage with the community? If he is going solely due to peer pressure, external expectations, or simply to have ‘fun,’ he may gain little from the experience — and it could even have a negative impact.

Kids at Simchas Beis HaShoeva



What guidance do you have for parents about letting their children attend Simchas Beis Hashoeva nighttime dancing? Should elementary or teenage children go unsupervised, and how can parents set appropriate boundaries?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

Simchas Beis Hashoeva in Crown Heights is a special and memorable experience—*when it is celebrated the right way*. But, it is important to recognize that not every part of the environment is conducive for young children (and others, too).

My strong feeling is that elementary-aged children should *not* attend unsupervised. Young children need the presence of a responsible adult to ensure their safety and well-being. It is simply too much for them to navigate on their own. Ideally, a parent or trusted adult should accompany children. The goal is to give children a joyful, positive experience *without* exposing them to any situation they are not ready for.

For older children—especially those between 12 and 16—there can be more flexibility, but only with clear boundaries. I do not think it is appropriate or safe to be out until 3 or 4 in the morning. While it might feel beautiful, meaningful, and enjoyable to be out dancing and at a Farbrengen, teens still need structure and a clear curfew. If your teenager wants to go dancing, frame it positively: “Yes, I want you to go. I want you to dance and enjoy the simcha.” But give them a time limit.

It is also important to explain the “why” behind your rules. Let your child know these boundaries are not about limiting their fun—they are about keeping them safe and helping them grow in a spiritual way and into responsible decision-makers. When children understand the reasoning, they are far more likely to respect the rules.

By setting clear expectations and staying involved, parents can help their children enjoy Simchas Beis Hashoeva in a way that is both uplifting and safe.

BY SETTING CLEAR EXPECTATIONS AND STAYING INVOLVED, PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN ENJOY SIMCHAS BEIS HASHOEVA IN A WAY THAT IS BOTH UPLIFTING AND SAFE.

Alcohol and Simchas Torah ... And Teens?



How should I talk to my children about risky behaviors, like alcohol or staying out late (like during Tishrei)?

RABBI AHARON WILSCHANSKI

This is a topic that comes up often, and it is one that parents should approach with both honesty and sensitivity. As children grow older, they naturally seek more independence — and with that comes exposure to new situations and temptations, like alcohol or late nights out.

When you talk to your child about these issues, do so with sensitivity, respect, and understanding. It is important to set clear boundaries while also recognizing that your little boy is becoming a young adult. With each stage of life comes greater maturity and independence — and our guidance needs to grow along with them.

Focus on Values, Not Just Rules

Do not just focus on the rules — focus on the values behind them. Explain *why* certain boundaries exist and how they connect to your child's personal and spiritual growth. Instead of simply saying, "do not drink," talk about the reasons behind that rule — the potential dangers, the long-term effects, and the importance of making responsible choices. This helps your child internalize the message and see its relevance to their life.

Be Clear and Direct

This is not the time for ambiguity or avoidance. Do not hide behind "I can not talk about this." Your child needs to hear from you.

Talk openly about the dangers of underage drinking — whether it is pressure to take a drink or simple curiosity. Acknowledge that it can be difficult, and explore strategies for handling those moments. Encourage your child to come to you — or another trusted adult — if they ever feel uncomfortable or unsure. Let them know that facing challenges is normal and that asking for help is a sign of strength. Keep the lines of communication open, so they know they're not alone — and that it is safe to come to you for help. No matter what happened, you will support them, not judge them.

The Role of Adults in the Environment

Let's face it — the bochurim will be around alcohol. So what can we, as parents and adults, do to help them navigate this safely?

First, we can not place all the responsibility on the boys themselves. They are still kids. It is up to us to help create an environment where it is easier to make responsible choices.

Mashpiim and others leading — or even just participating in — farbrengens (or any setting where alcohol may be present) should be responsible adults



YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN A BALANCE BETWEEN SETTING CLEAR BOUNDARIES AND ALSO ACKNOWLEDGING THAT YOUR CHILD IS GETTING OLDER. THERE IS THIS GROWING INDEPENDENCE AND MATURITY THAT COMES WITH EVERY STAGE IN LIFE."

who model appropriate behavior. The best education does not come from lectures or scare tactics; it comes from what they see and experience in real life, day after day. Children absorb more from observation than from instruction — especially from their parents and their educators. If you model self-control and healthy choices, you give them a living example to follow. Share your own experiences honestly, along with the lessons you've learned. Your actions today will shape their approach for their future.

THE BEST EDUCATION DOES NOT COME FROM LECTURES OR SCARE TACTICS; IT COMES FROM WHAT THEY SEE AND EXPERIENCE IN REAL LIFE, DAY AFTER DAY.

Monitoring Their Exposure to Alcohol

While you cannot monitor your child's every move, regular check-ins — with teachers, trusted local adults, and even directly with your child — are key to staying informed and involved, especially when they are away from home.

The Ultimate Goal

Ultimately, the goal is to equip your child with the tools and values they need to make safe, responsible decisions — even when you are not there to guide them directly. With open dialogue, clear expectations, and strong family values, you give your child a foundation to face these challenges with confidence and clarity.

How to Talk About Alcohol

You can discuss this with your young teenager:

Everything Hashem created can be used for good, or unfortunately for the opposite of good. Alcohol is no exception. While Jewish tradition includes occasions where alcohol is used, such as Kiddush or the Four Cups at the Pesach Seder, this refers to wine consumed at the proper time, in the proper amount, and in the proper way.

From the story of Noach, we see how drinking without proper boundaries can lead to harmful or improper outcomes. Think of it like driving: driving is powerful and useful, but we would never hand the keys to a 10-year-old or drive without a seatbelt. Driving requires maturity and responsibility, which is why there are rules and laws for safety.

The same applies to alcohol. If not used appropriately, it is not good and can lead to serious consequences. It must be approached with maturity, responsibility, boundaries, moderation, and the proper timing and context.

Mashke is not for young bochurim — period. There are laws. There are health risks. There are safety dangers.

**MASHKE IS NOT FOR YOUNG BOCHURIM — PERIOD.
THERE ARE LAWS. THERE ARE HEALTH RISKS. THERE ARE SAFETY DANGERS.**

**IN THIS UPCOMING
MAYORAL ELECTION,
EVERY VOTE IS VERY
VERY IMPORTANT.**

**IS EVERYONE IN YOUR
FAMILY REGISTERED
TO VOTE?**



**JUST 2 MINUTES
TO REGISTER**

Less time than coming up with an excuse.

**A quick and simple
online application—
just use the last 4
digits of your social.**



ANASHVOTE.COM

WILL TAKE YOU TO THE REGISTRATION PAGE.



**THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE
FOR FURTHERANCE OF
JEWISH EDUCATION**

**824 Eastern Parkway
Brooklyn, NY 11213**

Non Profit Org
US Postage
Paid
Brooklyn NY
Permit # 1235

Conversations with Community Educators...

Page

7

When your child comes home upset, take a neutral stance at first. Just listen and validate: “Wow, that sounds really upsetting.” Avoid jumping to take the side of either the school or your child before hearing the full story.

Remember—children view events through a limited lens. Their emotional reaction is based on their perception, which may not reflect the full context. They are processing it based on limited life experience and incomplete information. ... By withholding judgment, you model emotional regulation and create a secure and nurturing environment for them to talk openly.

Mrs. Dena Gorkin, *Director of Community Outreach at Operation Survival, and founder and principal of Bnos Chomesh Academy*

Page

18

A father’s role in his child’s education is extremely important. While mothers often take the lead—especially when children are younger—fathers have a unique and powerful influence, particularly as children grow older.... Fathers should also be visible partners to the school. A unified approach from both parents sends a strong message to the child—and the school—that education is a shared family priority, that both parents are invested.

Rabbi Aharon Wilschanski, *principal of Cheder Lubavitch of Morristown*

Page

12

Listen, support, and stand up for your child when necessary—but always with respect, positivity, and the goal of helping them grow through their experiences. It is your job, as the parent, to advocate for your child—no one else will do it for them. ...Even if schools or teachers sometimes seem reluctant to hear from parents, that doesn’t change your responsibility.

However, being an advocate does not mean shielding your child from every challenge. Your role as a parent is to support and validate their feelings while also empowering them to handle difficult situations. You want to help your child develop the tools and confidence to face adversity—not just remove every obstacle.

Mrs. Estee Lieblich, *early childhood consultant, parenting coach and temperament specialist.*