

My Take

Ami Living readers are invited to use this forum as a means of expressing their concerns regarding issues facing our families and communities. This is your soapbox. Send your submission to editorial@amimagazine.org.



Beyond the Classroom

CAN WE DO MORE TO PREPARE OUR CHILDREN FOR LIFE?

By Miriam Zeitlin

I have tremendous *hakaras hatov* to the schools my children attended throughout the years. They were imbued with a genuine love for *Yiddishkeit*, a strong foundation of Torah learning and solid *hashkafos*. Our teachers are truly the unsung heroes of our generation. All of the learning is truly impressive, but is there more we can

do to prepare our children for the real world?

As a mother, dating coach and *shadchan*, I see firsthand how many young people finish school lacking essential life skills and the impact this has on their personal and professional lives. For some, these skills come naturally. For most, however, they need to be taught. While many of

these things are absorbed by osmosis from parents, having a class taught by professionals in the field and practiced with peers can go a long way.

Here are nine life skills that I believe should be taught in every school alongside traditional subjects:

THESE SKILLS ARE CRUCIAL, AS THEY CAN HELP YOUNG PEOPLE BALANCE WORK, SCHOOL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1) Financial Affairs:

I remember the first time I got a job and was asked to fill out a W-4 form. I had no clue what that was. Students should be taught the basics of how to manage their finances, create a budget, balance a checkbook, and pay bills and taxes. They should understand credit, be able to manage debt and invest in the future. A typical attitude is, "When they need to do it, they'll figure it out." This is faulty thinking. Preparing them in advance will help them avoid problems in the future.

2) Time Management:

These skills are crucial, as they can help young people balance work, school and personal responsibilities by learning to prioritize tasks, set goals, and develop a routine that works for them.

3) Social Skills:

I should have really put this first because it's so important. There should be classes in how to make small talk, read social cues, maintain eye contact, and interact effectively and appropriately with people in various situations. They should also be taught the art of listening and having deeper conversations, which are essential for cultivating all types of relationships.

4) Proper Etiquette:

Proper etiquette depends on many factors, such as the context of the situation, the formality of the occasion, the relationship between the people involved and one's cultural background. The purpose of these rules is to help people navigate social situations more easily. Following dress codes, using polite language, being punctual, knowing what's appropriate to talk about and having table manners are just some examples.

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WHY WAIT UNTIL OUR CHILDREN HAVE GROWN TO TEACH THEM THESE ESSENTIAL THINGS?

5) Cooking:

We all know the joke about the young *kallah* who didn't know how to boil water. It would be nice if every single girl was a gourmet chef before she got married, but I'm not talking about learning how to cook a five-course dinner. Students should be taught meal planning, how to shop with a budget, food prep, proper food storage and how to put together a well-balanced meal. Yes, you can learn on the job, but isn't it better to be prepared in advance?

6) Basic First Aid and CPR:

This needs no explanation. Medical emergencies can happen to anyone, anywhere. Learning these things can save a life.

7) Career Options:

Students should learn about the many different options for *parnasab*

out there. Is earning a degree the right path for them? Young people are often persuaded to pursue certain paths, whether by family or society, and are ultimately unhappy. They might have chosen differently if they were aware of the plethora of other careers that exist. "Choose a job you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." It's also a good idea to teach interview skills, negotiating skills and how to write a proper resume.

8) Conflict Resolution:

If schools only taught one thing from this list, it should be this! In life, there will always be disagreement: at work, with your children and with your spouse. It can't be avoided. The key is knowing how to resolve your differences calmly and effectively. Good conflict resolution skills includes active listening, patience and open communication.

9) Shalom Bayis:

This is not only important for children who come from homes where *shalom bayis* is lacking, but also for those from homes where it is paramount. Some of the topics to be discussed should include:

- Having mutual respect
- Not to sweat the small stuff
- Patience
- Forgiveness
- Understanding each other's differences

How marriage isn't 50-50, but each person gives 100%

- Having realistic expectations
- Healthy boundaries
- Effective communication

How many of you wish you had learned these lessons before you walked down to the *chuppah*? ●