

Just Another Evening at Home

Posted by ploni.almoni@gmx.com - 31 Oct 2013 05:31

Tonight I got home and I found a crisis. One of my kids claimed that he will never be able to write neatly. Every time he does it it comes out wrong, he claimed. My wife was upset because she had to get something for my daughter, and she felt it was selfish of the boy to throw a tantrum, and she was yelling. She screamed that bedtime was fast approaching and there was no time for *this*.

This reminds of something Rabbi Miller says, namely that when a man comes home at night he should pause for a few seconds before he opens the door to prepare himself for anything he might have to deal with. I didn't do it but because I study thinking errors basically every day I was pretty well prepared.

I thought about yelling back at my wife, it was like a flash. I reminded myself that if I just take a rational approach and everybody just calms down and we solve everybody's problem I personally will have a much better evening. I cannot be drawn into a fight unless I want to.

I guessed that my wife was dealing with the usual perfectionism. She tells herself she is crap if she is not perfect. She cannot miss deadlines, be late at appointments, etc. So I said "it's a special situation, they will have to go to bed a little later."

Then she told me she was going somewhere. I really thought it wasn't nice for her to disappear at this difficult time, but over time I have found that the best approach is to send her away when she clearly can't wait to get away from the kids. They are my kids too, so I told her to go and I took over. When she got back she was pretty happy, and polite too.

Then I talked to my boy. After some questions it emerged that he believed that a) he will never be able to write letters properly, b) none of his friends like him and c) this means that he should be miserable. So I argued with these ideas. Since you feel the way you think, no wonder he was screaming.

It turns out he does have three friends, so I asked him "why do those three like you? are they crazy?" and "could it be that it's the others that are crazy and wrong not to like you?" This seemed to give him some relief. He was basically thinking that most people must be right. If

most people were always right then Christianity would be right and Judaism would be wrong. In reality because people don't know how to think straight, most people are wrong, and the truth is only found in a hidden corner. This is proof that it's not true that the majority is always right.

Then I asked him "maybe you *can* write these letters, even though you are sure you can't." That didn't help too much, although he thought it about it for a second. You really need evidence for that one, you need to study the evidence after the fact. Then I told him "you know, most people actually never write those kinds of letters, they use computers, it's not important in life at all, but we still want you to learn how to do it because it's good for your fingers." That seemed to help a bit. Then I pulled up these letters with the right fonts from google, and then I tried to write one. I told him, "look, you can lift up your finger, you can do it any way you want, you could make it really big to start with, and then go small later, when you know how to do it." This seemed to help. Then I told him "you know, your morah probably wants you to do it the way she likes it, and you still do it the way you learned from your old morah, but you have to do it the way your morah likes it now because everybody likes to think that their way is the best." And when I said that he was really relieved. Then he tried a letter using a totally new drawing motion, and it was pretty neat. And he was amazed that he was actually able to do it. Then I told him "don't forget that earlier you were sure you would not be able to do it, and now you can, remember that for next time." Basically next time I am going to remind him. Since I pointed it out to him, he will remember and it will chip away at his negative prediction for the future.

He was telling himself that there was one way to do something, and that he must be sad if he doesn't get everything right, and since he believes his brain is always right, he made a feeling of desperation. Once he figured out that maybe there is more than way of doing this he felt much better.

After that everybody was pretty happy, my wife came home, the kids went to sleep late, and now it's quiet.

Baruch Hashem we still have our home, the heat works, the appliances work, and the power is on, and I remembered that the mind doesn't work right and made the necessary adjustments.

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Re: Just Another Evening at Home
Posted by skeptical - 31 Oct 2013 06:28

You seem like a great husband and father!

Keep it up!

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