

Read This Book!

Posted by skeptical - 22 Apr 2013 03:40

I began reading a book over Shabbos that I think would be beneficial to anyone with our challenge. It's called **Growing With My Children - A Jewish Mother's Diary by Sarah Shapiro**.

It's a day-by-day account of a young mother who strives to work on her middos in order to handle her children in a calm manner instead of yelling at and hitting them. Like many of us, throughout the book Mrs. Shapiro is fearful of falling back into her old habits. Like many of us, she needs to figure out the underlying causes of what it is that is really frustrating her and works on dealing with them properly.

I think that all of us will be able to relate to her struggle to improve and could learn from what she has learned to help us in ours.

Married guys, check your bookcases for the book. If you don't have it, go out and buy it as a gift . If you're not married, get a copy, too.

www.eichlers.com/books/books/parenting-education/growing-with-my-children.html

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Re: Read This Book!

Posted by skeptical - 03 May 2013 02:19

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The children and I are all in a good mood. Could it be simply because I'm not raising my voice? Child raising has always been such a complicated maze of methods, philosophies and psychological angles. Mrs. Levi emphasizes the most obvious yet most overlooked factor: to speak with kindness and respect to our children, as we ourselves wish to be spoken to. It is our obligation to teach them to behave as we are commanded to in the Torah, and we must teach

them in a kind way.

Recognizing the thoughts underlying my angry reactions is something I can hardly imagine even beginning to tackle at this point. Nevertheless, the act of speaking quietly -no matter what- goes a long way towards tempering the emotion.

The only thing is that I'm so scared of losing this calm. It's ridiculous to pride myself on having overcome in two days an ingrained inability to control my temper with my children. Impossible. So when am I going to break?

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Undoing the damage seems horrendously complicated. It's unlikely that I can really correct a great deal of this stuff, because it's so rooted in my personality and background. Miriam Levy asserts with equanimity that it is a matter of changing one's habits, and that it is possible to do so in spite of the difficulties involved. That's a polite way of putting it. It's more like dragging a recalcitrant elephant out of quicksand.

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Re: Read This Book!

Posted by skeptical - 03 May 2013 02:22

Sounds familiar, huh?

"It's so much a part of who I am, I've been doing it for so many years. I've failed so many times in the past - It's only a matter of time until I fail again!"

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Posted by skeptical - 03 May 2013 21:30

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"Look, there is no doubt about it," Mrs. Levi answered, "...Nonetheless, it behooves us to recognize that we cling to the idea that we can't function when we're in pain, that we shouldn't have to, that it's impossible. These beliefs can be modified. We can say something to ourselves like: 'It's harder, for sure, but I can go on a little bit longer.' And it's important that we not come to regard our pain as a justification..."

"Any manner of stress will do it," she continued. "Dissatisfaction with yourself, marital problems, a sick child, an argument with a friend, tiredness, money problems. There's an infinite range of situations that can crop and make daily life harder. All I can say is that we can strive to get our tools in good working order so that we can take them out and use them when we really need them. We can make using these tools a habit. If you do something enough times, you'd be surprised how it can become habitual and second-nature. But what we're aiming for here is not self-control (though of course self-control plays a big part in life for all of us). What we're aiming at is a change of attitude toward pain. Not only physical pain, but all the pains of life. All the discomforts with which we are endlessly confronted."

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Later on, I walked with Miriam Levi to the bus stop and told her about my fear: the better things get, the more intense my apprehension that I'll lose what I've suddenly found.

She replied that given my long held, habitual pattern of responding angrily when I'm displeased or frustrated by my children, it's inevitable that I should sometimes make mistakes, and yell and hit. The trick is not to eat myself up with guilt over it.

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Can this big improvement in the emotional atmosphere be simply the result of a consistent lowering of my voice? Speaking quietly must be effecting my subconscious assessment of my life: "Since you're not yelling," says my brain, "there must be nothing to yell about. I'm coming to the conclusion that your life must be ok. Maybe it's even good. Maybe you even have something to be happy about."

Tonight was the workshop. The main topic was anger and guilt. Mrs. Levi said that in essence, anger is intolerance toward the behavior of others, and guilt is the intolerance toward the behavior of oneself. This fascinates me. It gives me a clue as to why anger and guilt are inextricably intertwined in a vicious circle: they are both rooted in intolerance.

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Re: Read This Book!

Posted by Chachaman - 06 May 2013 01:49

Thanks!

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