



Managing Stress During the Chagim

What can parents to reduce tension and negative cycles in the home?

Many parents experience negative cycles that take place in their homes. Either it's a specific child or a spouse who will begin a negative spiral that will lead to hours of stress, yelling and a general pervasive feeling of discomfort in the home. Is there any way to stop these cycles or triggers?

Although parents are affected by the moods and behaviors of family members, they have the power to set the tone in the home. What does this mean? If a mother views herself as a victim of circumstances beyond her control, she will feel hopeless. On the other hand if she realizes that as the parent you can set the tone no matter what chaos is happening around you, she will feel a sense of empowerment.

Especially during this time period when parents are subject to back to school stress, managing new schedules, and preparations for the chagim, tensions may run high.

First thing I suggest before trying to manage others, is for parents to look at their own needs and what can keep them

calm, focused and productive. Whether it's some form of self-care, relaxation or support, get yourself in the "can do" mode. Fortify yourself so that you can set a positive tone in your home no matter who is trying to disrupt the equilibrium. Parenting with confidence and modeling calm goes a long way.

Next, if there is a particular child who always seems to disrupt the calm, try to ignore negative behavior, catch him doing something good and praise him for even the smallest of pleasant behaviors. When a parent overlooks minor transgressions and reinforces positive behavior positive change tends to happen.

If there is a general sense of tension in the home, a family meeting where kids can share openly about feelings can give insight into what's really bothering them. Providing a safe environment where kids and parents can share their experiences and be validated can bring about beneficial change. This can also be done on an individual level.

Also, see if you notice any patterns. Are there difficult dynamics between certain kids? Are there times of day that are more stressful? Maybe they're hungry or tired?

Maybe it's a time of day where you, as the parent, are exhausted, drained or hungry? Once you identify triggers, try to find solutions and head them off at the pass.

The way parents respond to stress is very important to setting the tone in the home. Wishing everyone a lot of strength and patience while parenting in the new year!

Be'hatzlacha ■

Michal Silverstein has a MS in educational psychology and counseling. She facilitates parenting workshops in and around Jerusalem and maintains a private practice.

Feel free to send in any parenting questions you may have to parenting@ouisrael.org (Details will be changed to preserve anonymity).



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Real Life Rescues

Saving A Baby While Grocery Shopping For Shabbat

A few weeks ago, United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Shalom Klein (29) was grocery shopping for Shabbat at Hadar Mall in Jerusalem when he was suddenly drawn to the sound of cries and shouts emerging from the vicinity.

Responding to the commotion, Shalom discovered a highly distressed woman who urgently directed his attention towards a nearby car, screaming, "She's not breathing, she's not breathing."

The volunteer immediately rushed to the car and discerned upon closer examination that the woman's infant, who appeared to be around one year old, had likely choked on a snack. He leaned into the vehicle, turned the baby over, and performed back blows, causing a piece of pretzel to come out. The baby girl instantly began breathing again. The EMT remained with the family to make sure the child was out of danger and reassure the family, before returning to the mall to finish his grocery shopping.

"The mother expressed her gratitude towards me. It was a rewarding experience in the midst of an ordinary day," Shalom recounted. "I found it challenging to fall asleep at night from all the emotion."

Asked about his feelings during the critical moment, Shalom responded, "At that instant, my thoughts were absent, and it was purely instinctual. It was only afterward that I reflected on the situation."

Shalom stressed that United Hatzalah requires volunteers to undergo additional training sessions regularly. "Just two weeks prior to this incident, I had participated in a training session focused on CPR and choking scenarios. It was a good refresher," he noted.

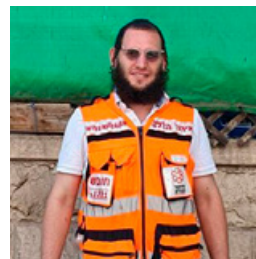


Photo credit: United Hatzalah