



OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

MICHAL SILVERSTEIN, MS

Where There's Smoke.....

**Dear OU parenting,
My 6th grade son came home and told me that a boy in his class came to school with a vape pen. He bragged to my son and a few friends that he uses it. What's the best way to handle this situation? He's so young!
F.R.**

Dear F.R.,

Firstly, Kudos to your son for sharing this information with you! Some children are afraid to share these things with their parents. They may be confused, scared and unsure how their parents will react. The first thing you should do is praise your child for sharing, which will enable you to help him.

Next is to provide your child age appropriate information. Unfortunately, vaping has become a prevalent and dangerous trend even among preadolescent children. As the vape substances come in fruity and candy flavors, they are more palatable to children. Substances used in vapes can vary from marijuana, nicotine, and other more dangerous substances, since vaping industry standards can be unreliable and unregulated.

Users can develop short term and long term effects from vaping such as respiratory problems and asthma in addition to developing an addiction. It's important to have a calm conversation with your child where you inform him of the dangers of this substance that may smell and taste sweet.

Finally, since this happened on school grounds and involved other children, it's no longer just an issue between you and the other boys' parents. It's probably not an isolated instance in the school either. You should contact the yoetzet (counselor) in the school and suggest that she speak to the class about vaping, and open the discussion for questions. Many times the yoetzet runs programs in the school in order to equip children with important life skills.

Unfortunately, there are many dangerous substances out there and they are more accessible today than they used to be, due to the internet. As long as your child can confide in you and turn to you for help if they need it, you will be able to educate them and guide them toward healthy choices. Be'hatzlacha. ■

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