



OU ISRAEL PARENTING COLUMN

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A Different Playbook

When you become a parent and are responsible for the care of a child, it can feel overwhelming. There's a lot of responsibility and many different parenting styles to choose from. Today, there is a strong awareness of how important parenting is and its implications. Modern society values education and the acquisition of parenting skills and techniques. These skills tend to empower parents making them feel secure in their child rearing.

But what if your child is different? What if your child suffers from chronic health issues or serious focusing problems, hyperactivity, oppositional defiant disorder or any number of mental health problems such as anxiety or depression. Many parents are at a loss. The regular parenting courses don't fully address these conditions. Many times schools don't know how to help this child. Other people tend to offer unwanted advice which makes the parent feel more isolated and more like a failure. What is a parent to do?

Firstly, if your child has significant challenges, then the regular parenting techniques won't always work.

Try to find specific parenting courses that cater to the needs of your child. There are

effective skills you can learn to parent your child which are geared to him or her.

Consult with a professional who can help you create a plan specific to your child.

Although schools are well versed in education, they don't always know how to deal with a child who has a unique set of challenges. Be your child's advocate. Contact the school, explain your child's struggle and discuss a game plan. You know your child best.

Look for a support group for parents who are going through the same challenges. The validation goes a long way. Many communities offer programs and resources that can help you and your child.

Being a parent of a child who has a unique set of challenges is draining. Try to surround yourself with a strong support system. People may judge you and think your child is spoiled, manipulative, unruly or undisciplined when in reality he is just struggling. Some people may give you a knowing smile which will help you get through a challenging day. Just remember that you are raising your child with a different playbook. ■

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).