

the art of parenting

A new six-session course from the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute



COURSE INTRODUCTION

Judaism is a parenting success story. Jews have demonstrated extraordinary resilience, prodigious achievements, and disproportionately greater contributions to the societies in which they live. What has ensured their survival through great trials and devastating holocausts while mighty civilizations have vanished? One of the most significant of a rich history of values is that Jewish children have always respected and admired their parents and their teachings. This provided a solid foundation for transmitting a strong ethical code despite transient societal trends, as well as an arsenal of tools to succeed.

In the last decades the literature on parenting skills have provided an array of shifting formulas and approaches. “Ever since the turn of the twentieth century you’ve been able to find two sides of the debate on how to parent,” says Ann Hulbert,

author of *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice about Children*. She explores the scientific claims and social visions of a plethora of experts who during the twentieth century aimed to make a science of child rearing. “One side says nurture is everything and therefore better be pretty orderly and strict, while the other side says nature will take its course and the key to parenting is the emotional bonding between parents and children.”

In a conflicting landscape of expert opinions, how can parents confidently adopt a parenting style they can trust with the crucial tasks of guiding the physical, emotional, and social development of their children? *The Art of Parenting* explores foundational principles and timeless advice culled from millennia of Jewish wisdom, as a basis for parents to develop their own parenting philosophies and techniques.

ACCREDITATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS FOR MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: Earn up to 15 CE credits from the American Psychological Association (APA), the American Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (CBBS), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), through a joint sponsorship of the Washington School of Psychiatry (WSP) and the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI).

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COURSE OBJECTIVES

1 Using core Jewish values, how can parents effectively transmit healthy self-concepts and strong desires to succeed in their children?

2 Considering religion and spirituality as important factors enhancing mental health practitioner's understanding, how can they incorporate them as tools in family therapy?

COURSE OVERVIEW

LESSON ONE

Parents, Not "Peer Ants"

How does one establish a household where children respect their parents? How do parents model respect as a significant influence on their children's character development and moral values?

Based on Dr. William Berkson's *Jewish Family Values Today*, and Dr. Wendy Mogel's *The Blessing of the Skinned Knee*, we will focus on establishing the parent as a figure of authority that guides a child in every stage of their development.

From a perspective of Jewish values of justice and compassion in relationships, we will compare Dr. Thomas Gordon's philosophy in his *Parent Effectiveness Training*,—which suggests resolving parent-child conflicts "without ever resorting to the use of either my power or yours..."—to Roger Fisher and William Ury's method of principle-based negotiation described in *Getting to Yes*. The lesson will address strategies for asserting leadership in times of disagreement without compromising the child's sense of being unconditionally loved and accepted.

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LESSON TWO

Proactive Parenting and Role Modeling

When parents are too accepting and forgiving they may fail to help children realize their full potential. When parents are too demanding they risk damaging the relationship. How high should parents set the bar of expectations of their children? How do they gently encourage children to stretch beyond their comfort zone and achieve the most success?

An article entitled *Role Modeling, Risk, and Resilience in California Adolescents* (published in *Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine*, by Drs. Yancy, Grant and others) uses empirical data to demonstrate the presence of appropriate role models is an

important predictor of adolescent health-related behaviors. Based on suggestions from Dr. Arthur Bandura's *Psychological Modeling*, this lesson highlights the importance of parents modeling a high level of function in key areas of life as an effective way of communicating standards and goals to their children.

Based on strategies set forth by Dr. Mogel in *The Blessing of the Skinned Knee* the lesson will provide strategies in teaching children to keep their sights on their objectives without letting stumbling blocks derail their best efforts.

LESSON THREE

Freedom with Responsibility

For inexperienced young decision makers too much freedom can lead to irresponsible behavior and the development of narcissistic tendencies. While parents must encourage their children to think independently and make their own choices, there are times when parents need to assert their authority.

Based on Dr. Jean Twenge's findings and suggestions in *Generation Me* and *The Narcissism Epidemic*, we discuss how parents can counterbalance the pervasive culture and provide the right balance of restrictions and space. We explore how the model needs to evolve as a child grows, providing clear guidance to young children while gradu-

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ally incorporating more freedoms as they mature and are able to assimilate the values they were taught. We discuss how to be at-

tuned to the unique development of each child to know when to effectively move to the next stage.

LESSON FOUR

Cultivating Healthy Self-Esteem

According to Dr. Dan Olweus of Norway—a pioneering expert on the subject of bullying and victimization—children who suffer from low self-esteem are at greatest risk of being bullied at school. Based on his findings and those of Dr. Mona O’Moore of the Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre of Trinity College in Dublin, we investigate the correlation of low self-esteem and victimization.

We discuss various methods of building a child’s self-esteem as put forth by Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski and Dr. Ellie Young. We explore means of providing children with an understanding of their innate value, a sense of their personal mission in society, and attaining a feeling of self-competence through carrying out their responsibilities. Parents we discuss how parents can help their children develop their unique talents and explore their creativity while adhering to the rules of life.

LESSON FIVE

Using the Carrot and the Stick

Praise and reprimand are powerful tools. One well-placed compliment reinforces a child’s self-concept, giving them the confidence to succeed. One ill-placed rebuke can be devastating.

Complimenting a child’s natural talent as opposed to their effort can be det-

rimental. (See *Praise for Intelligence Can Undermine Children’s Motivation and Performance* by Drs. C.M. Mueller and C.S. Dweck in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1998, Vol. 75, No. 1, 33-52). A rebuke that comes from a place of care and concern can make a child feel secure, loved, and cherished.

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This lesson will highlight the art of praise per Professors Jennifer Henderlong and Mark Lepper (in *The Effects of Praise on Children's Intrinsic Motivation: A Review and Synthesis*, *Psychological Bulletin* 2002, Vol. 128, No. 5) and Dr. David Pelcovitz (*How to Praise*).

What is the correct way to discipline? How do parents know when to use the “carrot” and when the “stick”? And what is most conducive to ensuring the healthy development of children? The lesson concludes with the basics of positive reinforcement and discipline based on *Balancing Act* by S.C. Radcliffe, *Effective Jewish Parenting* by Miriam Levy, and others.

LESSON SIX

Jewish Parenting

In *Jews without Judaism? Assimilation and Jewish Identity in the United States* (In *Social Science Quarterly* 77, 177-189, 1996), Robert Amyot and Lee Sigelman research the impact of religiosity, and personal contact with other Jews, upon Jewish identification. Their findings suggest that lower levels of religiosity and social contact are associated with a weaker sense of Jewish identity, but that declining religiosity poses a greater threat to Jewish identity than declining social contact.

Instilling a strong Jewish identity and Jewish values in children must be based on long term goals. It is less about what the child feels like in the moment and more on the focus of preparing children for the challenges that they will encounter.

We address the parents' role in ensuring Jewish continuity, and discuss strategies to effectively raise children who will be proud bearers of their heritage and moral upstanding citizens.

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