

## The seven-day positive diet

- *Communicating ineffectively with children.*
- *Children are scared to communicate with parents.*

Some people brighten the room when they enter, and some brighten the room when they leave.

In the busy life that working parents have, the amount of time we spend with our children and our spouses is very limited. “How do I make our relationship a pleasant experience for my 14-year-old son? When he was five his face used to shine, and he would be wreathed in smiles when I walked into his room. At 14, his face also shines and he smiles from ear to ear — but now it’s not when I walk into his room; it’s when I leave it. What should I do?” a concerned father asked me.

I asked how he spends the limited time he has with him?

“I make it an educational experience. I tell him I am displeased with the mess in his room. I also discuss my dissatisfaction with his haircut as well as his manners, and if there is time left I also try to educate him about how bad some of his friends are and how upset I am that he chose them as friends. My son is very upset about these discussions, but I feel that as a father I am obligated to educate him.”

I explained to the puzzled father that what he was doing was not education, but destructive criticism. And this meant that a vast chasm was developing between them. To avoid criticism some teenagers leave the room or the house where their parents are in order to avoid criticism. They have learnt a pattern: talking to their parents = criticism = bad feelings. And our natural instincts tell us to avoid hurt.

As adults, we sometimes encounter people with whom we've had bad experiences, or we visit places where we've had bad experiences. Being in these places or talking to these people will trigger negative responses and we will be disturbed, distressed and upset.

***Many of our fears are tissue-paper-thin, and a single courageous step would carry us clear through them***

As parents we want to make sure that we create positive responses in the minds of our children. Those responses should encourage them to spend time at home with us instead of venturing out in search of people and places that give them the comfort and sense of wellbeing that home no longer provides. You can afford to spend part of the time with your child correcting his/her behaviour if most of the time is spent positively. However, when you only have a limited amount of time with a child, make sure it is a pleasant experience, so that you can feel confident you will gain a positive response.

The way to do it is to go on a seven consecutive day mental cleansing diet. In these seven days you are not allowed to make even one criticism of your children. Not only should you not make it, you should also not feel it, because your body language sometimes speaks louder than words. The point is to concentrate on the positive traits of each child. Every child has redeeming qualities on which you can focus.

If you see your child sitting on the floor watching a video with his feet up, sit down on the floor next to him. Get into his world, thank G-D that he can see. Look for something you can complement him on, talk about subjects that interest him, ask his opinion. Show him that he counts.

If within the seven days you have slipped and broken the diet by saying or doing something negative, you have to start counting the seven days all over again. The idea is that with practice, you can replace your negative responses with positive ones; then you can return to the way things were — and you will see your child smiling and beaming when you walk into his room instead of when you leave it!

## **What happiness is not**

- ***Having unrealistic expectations to achieve happiness.***

Every person, regardless of nationality, religion or gender, wants to be happy. But why is it so few people can claim to be truly happy? Is it because they don't know how to be happy? Or have they given up expecting it?

Because happiness can mean different things to different people, it is easier to describe what happiness is not.

A common mistake people make is to confuse fun with happiness. While having fun is a positive and healthy component of happiness, pursuing fun does not in itself bring happiness. Eating the wrong foods may be fun, but people who look after their bodies are usually happier. Being single and dating a lot of people without committing to one person may be fun, but research suggests that those who are married live longer and are usually happier. For a teenager taking drugs may be fun, but I have never met even one truly happy drug-taking teenager.

“If I had lots of money I would be happy,” I have heard people say. Is that really so? If it were true, all rich people would be happy and all poor people would be unhappy. We know this is false. We find happy and unhappy people among the rich and the poor.