

# Anash Chinuch

## INYANIM OF TZNIUS

### DRAW ATTENTION TO THE SEPARATION

In regard to the separation [between boys and girls], if at all possible, it is worthwhile to make one *kinus* for boys and girls at the same time, [with a separation] in order to draw attention to the separation. However, it is simply understood that, if it is not possible to ensure separation [within the one *kinus*], or, if there is even a doubt, especially with regard to singing, then, there will be no other choice, and it will not be possible to do the *kinus* [as one], therefore there should be two *kinuses*. (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 19, p. 261)

### "CONTAGIOUS DISEASE"

Surely, it is not necessary to explain that a majority vote is not necessary when there is a ruling on the matter in *Shulchan Aruch*. It is also not relevant to say that times and conditions have changed. One of the 13 Principles of Faith is that the Torah will not be altered. A change in conditions can only effect making a fence or [making] a greater stringency than the ruling, whenever there is a need. This is, then, in the realm of עשו סייג לתורה "make a fence for the Torah." Also, regarding this, the deciding factor is the ruling of a Rav and so forth.

If this is said regarding all matters of Torah, how much more so in regard to the suspicion of a lack of separation [between boys and

girls], the opposite of *tznius* and so forth. It is apparent that if one boy or one girl in the class or group stumbles in this area, it is like a "contagious disease." Since corruption of this sort tends to be done secretly, the danger is even greater, as it takes some time before it becomes known. Also, then, it is difficult to piece together what happened and who was involved and so forth.

Regarding difficulties in the matter, it has been spoken about a number of times, that since the Torah was given by the Creator of the world, who rules the world in every place and at all times, including now, in our times, surely He gives the strength needed to overcome the obstacles and the concealment. Hashem wanted that each and every person of Yisrael to recognize that he is a descendent of a wise nation, and he has been given free will. The desire of the Creator, however, is clearly: ובחרת בחיים ("and you shall choose life").

From what was said above, it is understood, that in the matter of separation one must not make any compromises. It was written that there is a mixed event, but only once every three weeks. I would like to know how one can explain to those who take part, that once every three weeks, it is permissible, but more often it is not. (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 38, p. 177)

### NOT ONLY A RELIGIOUS MATTER

I emphasized that my firm request to keep the principle of separation in Chabad institutions is not

[applicable only] when they are Chabad institutions, but rather, my view is clear that this is how it should be in all schools and *chinuch* institutions. In the United States, in our orphaned generation, this is not only a religious matter, but also ethical and modest according to the most simple understanding. We see the result in institutions where this foundation is not practiced; it has become so common, that even though efforts are made to conceal these things and to avoid unpleasant publicity, despite this, from time to time, it gets out and reaches the ears of the public.

(*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 14, p.433)

### BEGINNING AT THE MOST TENDER AGE

[Regarding the separation of boys and girls] Anyone with knowledge in *chinuch* surely does not need the importance of the said separation to be explained, beginning with the most tender age ... since the habits of babies become nature... (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 25, p. 2)

### "I CANNOT SLEEP AT NIGHT..."

During the month of Tishrei 5721, Harav Shmuel Chefer, the dean of Beis Rivka of Kfar Chabad, had a lengthy *yechidus* with the Rebbe. During the *yechidus*, the Rebbe began to discuss the location of the girls' school and seminary. The Rebbe raised his voice and said, "I cannot sleep at night, due to the close proximity of the girls and boys schools!"

(continued on page 2)

This view was echoed in a letter written to President Shazar (*Igros Kodesh*, vol 24, page 126), where the Rebbe writes that only due to technical difficulties was the Kfar originally set up as one village. But now that it has been made possible, the educational institutions "should be situated in separate locations, the boys in Kfar Chabad, and the girls in Kfar Chabad II."

The letter continues to say that while the villages should be separate, they should be close enough, that the residents may be able to visit each other on *Shabbosos*. The Rebbe's vision was indeed realized, with the completion of Kfar Chabad II in 5735. (*Lmaan Yishmeu* issue 121) – reprinted with permission of *Merkaz Anash*

#### **SPEAK TO CHILDREN ABOUT MATTERS OF YIRAS SHOMAYIM**

Surely, you will utilize your influence over your son to influence him to increase in matters connected with *yiras shomayim*... There are parents who are either embarrassed to speak of these matters with their children, or they say to themselves that surely it will have no effect. Just as it is a *mitzvah* to say [some things], it is a *mitzvah* not to say [some things]. However, according to what my father-in-law, the Rebbe, said a number of times, this is not the case; endeavors and toil will not be expended in vain. This is true, even when [the efforts] are done by a regular Jew; how much more so, when inspiring things are said by a father, who, according to *chassidus*, is one with his son. His words will be accepted, and especially in such a case where surely the words will come from the heart, as it says in our liturgy, כרחם אב על בנים ("like the compassion a father has for his son"). (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 5, p. 323-324)

#### **EXPLAINING INTIMATE MATTERS**

With regard to speaking to young boys and girls at the age of maturity about the topic of, and problems related to, the *yetzer* [for the opposite gender] and intimate matters, it is difficult to take any particular position. On the one hand, our Sages state concerning the verse you quote in your letter, "If there is a worry in the heart (in this case, of the youth), it should be discussed with others." On the other hand, regarding this area, our Sages have said, "There is a small organ in a man; when it is satiated, it hungers, and when it is made to hunger, it is satiated."

As I have observed done in several places, the appropriate solution is for the teachers involved to consult with one another and decide how to proceed regarding a particular male or female student. At most, they should speak to small groups of a maximum of two or three students for whom such a discussion would be

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suitable, obviously talking with boys and girls separately. However, this should not be done in a publicized manner as is customary in many places.

Even then, great deliberation is required in order not to cause others, or oneself, to stumble by committing the (scriptural, or at least rabbinic) prohibition of being enticed to think forbidden thoughts and the like.[1] (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 22, p. 404)

#### **SHOULD THESE ISSUES BE ADDRESSED?**

I have pleasantly received his *seforim*: "*Taharas Yom Tov*" - five volumes - as well as the notification that he is going to publish a sixth volume. They are based on the *Sefer*: "*Yesod Yosef*" which speaks about "*Shmiras Habris*" and "*Tikun Hapgam*", *chas v'Sholom*, even though it is not the custom within Anash to publish specific *seforim* that explain the reason for the sin, and not even to specifically speak about it publicly with much exposure. The reason for this is based on the words of the Tzemach Tzedek: "The contemplation and fear of the sin can by nature cause the

emission of semen just like sinful thoughts." ... In this country, within known sects where there has been a great breach in this sin, it is like an "open valley" in their eyes. More so, some of the doctors, who are quacks and who permit the prohibited, instruct those who come to them to do it regularly. They mock those who refrain from it and they explain that not only is it permissible, but it is a *mitzvah*, *rachmana litzlan*. With the multitude of our sins, there is nobody who will speak out, rebuke and reveal the disgrace. Not even to explain at least the destruction of the body and its strength as well as the destruction of life that comes through it. In addition to the impurity it brings to the soul and its descent... In the words of the Alter Rebbe: "It is more heinous.. and [the individual's] sin is greater with regard to the enormity and abundance of the impurity of the *kelipot* he begets and multiplies them to an exceedingly great extent." (*Tanya*, End of Ch. 7...)

There is reason to suggest to publish and publicize the greatness of the sin and its blemish and to specifically speak in this regard, only for the purpose of saving the soul of the youth of Israel from descending... and primarily to strengthen and expand through this the attention of the teachers, the *Rosh Mesivta* and *Rosh Yeshiva* to the situation therein, since, in a substantial and important measure, it is dependent upon them to fix this preposterous situation. In accordance with this measure, they are to blame. As it says: "He who is able to rebuke..." "Hashem's desire shall prosper in his hand," "To cause the community to be meritorious." To inspire them "To do justice (which is mercy) for the oppressed." "Which refers to the sparks of holiness that are "oppressed" through the evil deeds of individuals." (See the *Siddur* of the Mitteler Rebbe), until Hashem will gather the dispersed of his nation, through *Moshiach Tzidkeinu*, speedily in our days, Amein. With the blessing of success, (*Igros Kodesh*, vol. 9, p. 24-25)

#### **LOWER THE AGE OF MARRIAGE**

Here I feel duty-bound to express the profound pain that I have felt for several years now over the fact that when the mass immigration of our Sephardic brethren to the Holy Land began, it



was found “appropriate” to raise the age of marriage in a way contrary to the accepted custom in the lands from whence they came.

If when this decree was made there was doubt as to which is greater – the benefit or the loss [of this change] – the bitter consequences of this decree during these years on account of our numerous sins, and to our great distress, have demonstrated the tremendous damage this change has caused.

Obviously my intention is not to bemoan the past; however, from time to time new suggestions are raised with regard to raising or lowering the age of marriage, and my opinion is definitely evident from

the above. If only Ashkenazic Jewry would also become accustomed to marriage at a very young age, in accordance with the words of Rav Chisda\*\* (Kidushin 29b). (*Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 22, p. 404)

\*\*Rabbi Chisda praised Rabbi Hamnuna before Rabbi Huna as a great man. He said to him, “when he visits you, bring him to me.”

When he arrived, he saw that he wore no sudra. “Why do you have no sudra?” he asked. “Because I am not married,” was the reply. Thereupon he turned his face away from him. “See to it that you do not appear before me until you are married,” he said.

Rabbi Huna was thus in accordance with his views.

For he said: “He who is twenty years of age and is not married spends all his days in sin.” “In sin?” Can you really think so?” But say [that it means that he], spends all his days in sinful thoughts.

Rava said, and the School of Rabbi Yishmael taught likewise: “Until the age of twenty, the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and waits. When will he take a wife? As soon as one attains twenty and has not married, He exclaims, ‘Blasted be his bones!’”

Rabbi Chisda said: “The reason that I am superior to my colleagues is that I married at sixteen. And had I married at fourteen, I would have said to Satan, ‘An arrow in your eye.’”

## ADDRESSING TZNIUS INYANIM WITH OUR CHILDREN RABBI LEVI KAPLAN

People have deeply rooted beliefs about what issues should or shouldn't be discussed with their children, from their upbringings and beyond. Regardless of our upbringing, nowadays people are more open and discuss sensitive and delicate issues more freely. A consideration is how they come to learn about it, almost always they learn the information with goyishe views. Even if children are taught the right values, they are often influenced subconsciously with a *hashkafa* that is diametrically opposed to *Yiddishket* and *Chassidishkeit*. This is one of the reasons why it is important for parents to speak to children at a fairly young age (and most parents do not realize that children nowadays are much more aware at far earlier ages than before, so it is always preferable to talk to children before they are exploring then once they are experiencing and engaging). Parents should present the proper way to approach *tznius* and intimacy, without shame, fear, or ambiguity. Children should learn about the *kedusha* of these matters and not come to think about intimacy as a *goyish* thing. It is preferable that these matters be broached over many years little by little instead of all at once, and the children must feel empowered and proud of the *Yiddishe/Chassidishe* view which will ensure that instead of envying the *goyim*, c”v, they will feel secure and grateful to follow the way of the Torah. It is important to emphasize that just as mothers speak to their daughters about the changes in their bodies, fathers, too, should talk to their sons as they enter puberty. If you aren't sure what to say, ask someone for guidance, don't ask them whether you should discuss it, ask them for the right words. It is easier in the present not to speak to your children, it is infinitely more valuable to speak to them sooner. If for some reason the parents cannot do this, they must ensure *mashpiim* or *rabbanim* to do so in their stead. In addition, *mashpiim*, *rabbanim*, and teachers should also try to speak with each student, recognizing that parents often shy away from broaching these subject and the child is shy to ask or thinks they already know everything.

Ignoring the topic nowadays, should not be considered an option, and parents and teachers should not be afraid of this conversation. The Rebbe clearly writes that things such as *tznius* need to be spoken about. The Rebbe explained that nowadays there is *hefkeiros* and *peritzus* in this area with medical professionals publicly advocating for a lifestyle that is against the Torah. If we refuse to address these issues, they will not magically disappear on their own as children get

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to increase and affect more problematic behaviors and choices. Parents have the *achrayus* to talk to their children about all the aspects of *tznius* and intimacy in an age-appropriate manner, and clearly explain what is permissible and forbidden in regards to ourselves, what is permissible and forbidden regarding other people. Nevertheless, it is important not to scare them by quoting a *maamar Chazal* about what will be if they do something wrong.

The fear of introducing foreign concepts to a naïve child is remote, and in all likelihood, the children are already aware of these matters. Of course, some children are more exposed than others; however, children are masters of concealment, and, at times, the less of an indication parents see on their children, the more of a likelihood that they are off to the races in their own heads. Even if a child would be brought up on an island, without any outside influence, they would experience desires that are *hepech haTorah*. The Rebbe says that the main purpose for which the Alter Rebbe wrote *Iggeres HaTeshuva*, is for the *Chet HaYoduah*. This subject is very important to speak about to pre-teens and teenagers, especially boys, as for many these issues occupy a lot of their time and brain space, and they need to be taught what the Torah has to say about it and the big picture of life in general, and the importance of all other areas of their life, beyond these issues as well. We owe it to our children to stop circumventing and ignoring these topics so that we can provide teens with tools and methods that will allow them to spend their yeshiva years focusing on the truly important matters of learning Torah, doing *mitzvos*, and growing in their *Yiddishkeit* as they approach adulthood.

Some children experience things before they know that it is assur. It is crucial to give teenagers tools on how to deal with feelings of loneliness or boredom, which often lead to self-defeating behaviors. It is important to alleviate a child's stress by discussing these things, which are normal and do not reflect negatively on the child, but need to be contained. A child should find solace in knowing that there were many people throughout the ages who faced the same challenges, and doing so is part of the job of being a Torah Jew and a soldier in the Rebbe's army— to move forward and not to get stuck.

Sometimes children are found out, caught doing something embarrassing, perhaps behaving in an immodest way. It is important for parents to appreciate that it is possible for a child to lead a healthy and *frum* life filled with *yiras Shomayim*, even if something not *tzniusdik* happened. misinformation and incorrect association with things that are in the news media can lead parents to believe that a child who has a certain experience will never be able to be *chassidish*, the truth is that many people will unfortunately experience something negative at some point in their life and are able to lead normal *frum* lives.

Parents should know that an *untznusdik* occurrence is not the end of the world. If a parent discovered that a child watched a movie or browsed the web, etc., of course they would need to help their child in dealing with it, as mentioned above, but the parents should not think that because the child was exposed to something, that is it, and their *taharah* is gone forever! We all know many people who did something wrong and some point and went on to live as *chassidim* and *yerei shamayim*. The crucial point is not to bash the child, but to show compassion and willingness to help them in a supportive, rational and objective manner.

It is important to note that in regards to the *inyanim* of *tznius*, some children believe that it is only because we are *Yidden* that we are restricted in our behavior, and that *goyim* do whatever they wish. while there are many layers of error with this misconception, it is we who formed it! First, it is crucial that we discuss with them how that we are not restricted. Intimacy, similarly to a *Sefer Torah*, is an act of *kedusha* which must be protected, not c"v squandered. The image of the strength of a laser beam in comparison to a regular flashlight which dissipates its light can better illustrate this point. Second, children should be taught that looking at *goyim* this way is deeply cruel and biased, it is equating *goyim* to animals, all decent people live decent lives, in fact millions of human beings lead decent and honest lives and would never do what they might dream of. What children can imagine from watching movies, etc. is limited to pop-culture and Hollywood, an agenda-driven industry and many *goyim* consider the life portrayed therein as the despicable. Often, looking around and *goyim* who live on your block or do work around your home or office that can be a good example of a decent person. All human beings regardless of whether they are Jewish or not strive to lead decent and productive lives, not like the fantasies they might be thinking about.

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## PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS

■ **INSPIRATION** Students gain immensely from *farbrengens* from inspiring men and women. An inspiring *farbrengen* can greatly impact a young person's decisions and change the course of his or her life

■ They should have a mentor program at this age to connect them to role models! Care must be taken to ensure that she/he is a real role model, someone closer in age, *chassidish*, approachable, and someone who they feel comfortable speaking to.

### ■ NEED A SAFE FORUM TO HAVE QUESTIONS

**ADDRESSED** Many *bochurim* and girls, who have spent years in yeshiva, privately harbor real questions such as: how do I know that G-d exists? or why is it not acceptable to talk to a girl? They do not have a forum to address these questions in yeshivah. Such questions would get a boy kicked out of "the system" or main-stream yeshiva altogether. As a result, there were boys who wear a hat, jacket, beard but are not *shomer Shabbos*, or, have girlfriends! Yet in "the system". The attitude is excluding and therefore failing these boys and thereby creating a vacuum in the

Lubavitch yeshivah system where beautiful *neshamos* are being placed outside the box, because the box cannot expand to include normal teenage issues. They are placed outside the box because of their questions initially. Then they feel different, outside of the main stream, and eventually act different (*frei* out, c"v)

■ We as a community should ask ourselves what is leading to so many young boys and girls straying from *Yiddishkeit*? How can they be made to feel that there is a contradiction in their *Yiddishkeit* if they want to ask fundamental questions? Is it not better that they ask these questions now than later in life?

■ **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS** Our children need a safe forum to have questions answered, either one on one or as a class where students can write their questions anonymously and have them addressed by a *farbrengener*. Another option is a "know what to answer" type class that addresses how to answer those who ask you, and their own questions answered at the same time.

■ Boys and girls need to feel a sense of safety and security to ask their age appropriate teenage questions

without being chastised or belittled; to grow into emotionally healthy adults and *chassidim*. *Mashpiim* need to make the students feel secure that they can speak about their real issues without fear of being kicked out.

■ *Mashpiim* need focus on the *bochur* as a person/individual and to let him know he is safe to share his teenage issues; these fundamental topics should be discussed subtly in a *farbrengen* style setting (without too much emphasis) for boys to know that they are not alone.

■ There needs to be more emphasis on protecting one's *neshama* and the preciousness of the *neshama* or the *neshama-guf* partnership, the importance of *tahara*. This is something to instill in children from a young age. The issue of *tahara* and the preciousness of our *neshama-guf* relationship is more emphasized in girls from a younger age because *tznius* dress begins in Lubavitch by age 3. There is more discussion for girls at the high school level when learning *hilchos yichud* (babysitting, summer camps, *chessed* projects, elevators, etc). However, boys also need this, but it has been much less of a focus. Perhaps, this can be emphasized

with *mikvah* before *davening*, even from a young age (by the way: this is where the father should also address the ideas of bad touching and that kind of safety).

■ Learning *sichos* or *Ma'amorim* about the mission of the *neshamah* and its partnership with the body; how the body of a *Yid* is *kadosh*, and that, for example, *mikvah* is the final step that a convert takes in his/her conversion process (because we cannot change a *neshamah*, as it was always Jewish, but the body needs purifying).

■ For older boys in yeshivah, a father or *mashpiah* should have a talk with him about the *kedusha* of a Jewish marriage; the home as a *Mikdash Me'at*, etc. He needs to see that there is an advantage in waiting and distracting his thoughts from curiosity. Good normal family life as a role model is essential. If not from home, then the *mashpiah* and teachers should invite *bochurim* over more (when no girls are at home, etc.)

■ Mothers should explain to their daughters how the changes they are experiencing are holy, related to their body being prepared to bring life to this world

■ Regarding the problem of boredom, as *Chazal* say (*Rambam Hilchos Ishus* 21:3) "*habatala meivia lidei zima*". It is not only an issue of having empty time, but it is a problem of an empty mind. An adolescent may have plenty to do (schoolwork, chores, and even activities), but if they don't engage him fully, he is likely to look for something

"more stimulating." A wise parent (*roeh es hanolad*) must ensure that his child is occupied with stimulating activities, particularly ones that engage the mind. An adolescent who is active and productive, feels satisfied and doesn't feel such a need for this fake and empty stimulation.

■ Another very important factor to address in order to properly tackle this problem is the need for affection and warmth. A large percentage of people who fall into addiction say that they were raised in a structured and demanding home, and they lacked the acceptance and understanding that they so desperately craved. The adolescent thus turns to an artificial avenue to fill his lacking. Of course, it doesn't solve his problem, but he keeps on coming back out of lack of a better option. An adolescent who lacks these conditions can feel desperate and is almost compelled to act out (though he has free choice, it is extremely difficult, especially when it is so accessible).

■ Supervision: When students go off to *Eretz Israel* for their yeshiva/seminary year, this is a first time freedom for many. It would be beneficial to have less out-*Shabboses* of unsupervised freedom and more organized *Shabbosim*.

■ Schools organizing *Shabbosim* should take care, when setting boys up for meals that there are no daughters at home. Same for girls being set up where there are sons home. (Story: HaRav Chodakov called the *hanholo* of Montreal Yeshiva *Tomchei Tmimim* and complained "how could it be that we let our *bochurim* eat at homes where there are girls on sha-

bos?"). When a member of the *hanholo* asked from what age this applies, he answered "even from three years old". As told by Rabbi Isak Gurary)

■ Our children need to be built up from within, from a young age, to feel strong in being different in order to be able to stand up to peer pressure and the culture around us.

■ Yeshivahs should not assume that every parent has had these necessary conversations with their children and should be addressing it on a teenage level (appropriately of course).

■ Maintaining a good relationship with your children so they feel comfortable opening up to you about the issues in their lives. We recommend the books "Living and Parenting" by Rabbi Yakov Horowitz and Preparing Your Child for Success By Rabbi Zecharya Greenwald

■ Know your child's world- Maintain regular contact with teachers (and camp counselors in the summer) to stay informed about how child doing academically, what they are learning, how they are doing socially, who they are friends with etc.

■ Many students do not understand the harm in contact between boys and girls and similar questions. These topics should be addressed through presentations, Rebbe's *sichos* etc.

■ If it is not already being done, *hilchos yichud* should be learned.

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## GUIDING OUR CHILDREN IN A MODERN WORLD

BY RABBI YAAKOV HOROWITZ | ADAPTED FROM A SHIUR

There was a fascinating study done by the Kaiser Foundation, a secular foundation, about children's media consumption. Children—and adults—are losing their ability to focus. One of the findings of the study was that children are consuming more media in less time than before because they are doing three or four things simultaneously. In a eight-hour time span, a child consumed eighteen hours of media on average through various gadgets. This comprehensive study took fourteen months to complete.

In this essay, we will be addressing four common questions, mostly based on cases we have dealt with in Project Yes.

It is important to understand the process of adolescence because so much of it directly

relates to the issue of technology. Adolescence is your children transitioning from your home to their own lives. What greater transition is there than going from the security of your home to an uncertain life? A lot of what we see in dealing with adolescents is really stemming from a lack of confidence. Another confusing idea is that we do not know who is the boss: Are they the boss? Are we the boss?

### Q) WHEN IT COMES TO TECHNOLOGY, WHAT DO YOU ADVOCATE?

A) When it comes to our children, I advocate the three "P"s. Namely: **Postpone** to the extent that you can to delay the child's access to technology until they are mature enough to use it in a proper way.

**Protect** your children. We need to spiritually monitor our children in order to supervise and ensure that

they are watching appropriate content. In addition, we need to teach them basic safety such as not visiting chat rooms and not sharing personal, identifying information with strangers, as there unfortunately are real predators online.

**Prepare** your child to make good choices. If you do not prepare your children to making good choices, the first two are just delay tactics, postponing the inevitable time when you will have to deal with it. Your children will have to make choices on their own, at younger and younger ages. By preparing them properly, you are enabling them to make good choices when they are interactive with different forms of media and technology.

### Q) HOW DO WE ENSURE THAT OUR CHILD MAKES GOOD CHOICES WHEN IT COMES TO TECHNOLOGY?



# GUIDING OUR CHILDREN IN A MODERN WORLD

BY RABBI YAAKOV HOROWITZ | ADAPTED FROM A SHIUR

A) There are two types of growths we see in children: “building” and “planting”. An example of building would be putting up a brick wall. It is neat and orderly but once you put down the bricks, they are not going anywhere! They will not move an inch. If you pile these bricks up, you will have a lot of nachas right away by seeing progress immediately. The problem is that there is no continuous natural growth. Once you take your hand away and stop building, the bricks will sit there until somebody else takes over or knocks it down.

Planting on the other hand is very messy and we do not see results right away. Sometimes it takes months until you see something. But the beauty of it is that it continues to grow on its own afterwards.

Reb Wolbe says that when we parent with logic and explanation rather than by force, we have real chinuch. Chinuch is a planting process, and it is messy. If you parent by force, they will listen to you at the beginning, but they really have not picked up any life lessons from what you have taught them.

If you go into your house with a stack of candies or five dollar bills, you would be the best parent on the block! Your kids would do everything you ask them! Is bribing effective long-term? Of course not! It is actually destructive in the long term because children will learn that they do not have to do anything unless they get a reward for it.

It is important to remember that when children are young, they need a blend. We cannot only focus on “planting” because kids need to be told “do this because I said so, and as your Mommy or Tatty, I know best what is good for you” from time to time. However, it is important to remember that this parenting style alone will not have a long-lasting effect and should not be used often, especially as children get older and understand more.

The ultimate building would be corporal punishment, which I hope you are not doing; if you are, please figure out how to achieve the same result differently. It is simply abuse prevention! If you are *potching* your children, how can you then tell them that no one is allowed to hurt them? You are hurting them yourself! If you are interested in learning more about this, I wrote an article that is on my website ([www.RabbiHorowitz.com](http://www.RabbiHorowitz.com)) called “Spare the Rod, Protect the Child”.

The issue of building and planting is highly connected and relevant to how we introduce the idea of technology to our children. The rules that you make are important, but if they are only building, then it is a temporary solution. We need to take the time to explain the reasons behind the ideas and be mechan-ech our children.

## Q) OUR 7-11 YEAR OLD CHILD WANTS AN IPHONE WITH INTERNET ACCESS. SHOULD WE GIVE IT TO HIM/HER? WHICH RULES SHOULD WE ENFORCE TO PROTECT OUR CHILD?

A) In my 30 years of dealing with children, I have discovered a *chiddush*—most kids want to do what is right, and most kids would like to follow rules. They circumvent the rules when they feel that there is no chance that they can get what they want. Therefore, if you set up a system where they are going to find it

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them.

difficult to follow your rules, especially children at risk, sooner or later the child will go and do it behind your back, and then all bets are off, as you are really not parenting them anymore.

Get in the habit of having open discussions with your children, listen to them, let them talk to you. You have to be very tolerant or they are going to stop communicating with you. Try to have the type of relationship with your children where you really have an open dialogue. It is critically important.

Almost ten years ago, a talmid who was in eighth grade at my yeshiva called me. He wanted an iPod and his parents said absolutely not. It went back and forth for a few hours until the boy *shlepped* his parents to a “*din Torah*” with me, so I could adjudicate this machlokes. I would like to share what I did. Each one of them made their case. Ultimately, I asked the boy, “Why do you think your parents do not want you to have this?” I told the parents to give the child ten index cards and have him write down a reason on each card why he thinks his parents do not want him

to have this technology. Then I asked him to stack the cards in the order he thinks are his parents’ main concerns. I told the parents to do the same. Every child I do this with usually writes things such as “my parents are scared that I will see inappropriate content”, “I am not going to do my schoolwork”, and “there are predators online”. Then I tell the child to flip the card over and write down how he is going to address his parents’ concerns.

The parents and children usually come to a pretty good understanding. The child will say, “they are afraid of inappropriate content, okay, so put a filter on it”. The kid offers solutions. “You’re worried that I will not do my homework, okay, I will leave it with you and I will not take it until my homework is done”. In effect, the kid becomes his own censor.

I have done this hundreds of times about different things and found it to be very helpful, and I hope you will too. With a younger child, you can do this by just asking him or her, “Why do you think we don’t want you to [fill in the blank]?” and “What are you going to do to address this concern of ours?”

The research shows that rules made by employees are seven times more likely to be followed than rules made by bosses. Now imagine if the parent said “I am giving you the phone, but only if you...”. I think this is what Reb Wolbe means about planting. It is easier to make the rules on your own. But then you are fighting with the kid to keep them. Whereas, if the rules come from him or her, think about how much more likely it will be that he or she will follow them. When children have some input on setting the rules, they understand the logic behind them. Let your children come up with the problems and solutions. Problem solving. You want them to walk a mile in your shoes and know where you are coming from and this helps a lot when you are enforcing the rules, as then there is much less resentment when you enforce the rules. You are an enforcer, that is your job as a parent, but you are giving them a say in making rules that affect their lives very much.

Does that mean they will listen to everything they say? Of course not! But at least you will have some sort of dialog that is logical with them. At 13, 15, or 18 they might make mistakes, but at least you have a framework that they bought into, and if they do not listen to the rules, then you take that thing away or reevaluate the rules.

The most important question when thinking of setting policies for your children regarding internet usage is “Is my child at an age where he or she can do it behind my back?”. I propose that at that point it is time to do it in front of you, and with supervision

There are many variables here. It is not just an issue of chronological age, it is maturity, level of responsibility, how trustworthy they are, if they follow rules naturally or whether they immediately think “how can I do differently”, what their peers are doing, etc. It is really a very complex decision for which there is no simple answer. On either end of the continuum, there is a child who is eighteen or twenty, basically an adult, and a three year old.

**Q) WE TELL OUR CHILDREN HOW AWFUL THE INTERNET IS AND WHY WE DO NOT WANT THEM ON IT, BUT MY WORK DEMANDS THAT I HAVE INTERNET AT HOME. AM I GIVING MIXED MESSAGES?**

A) It is extremely important to be congruent—to have a consistent message that you live with and that your children live with. This business of “I am doing something that you cannot do” is very challenging to say the least. So think about what your messages are and think if they are congruent with the way you live. For example, if you explain to your children that you only use the internet for work or to do research, learn Torah, etc., that may be acceptable to the children who will get the message that the internet is to be used only for certain purposes. However, if you claim you only use it for work, but the children catch you browsing other things, your message is very mixed up and confusing to them, in addition that they lose trust in you which is very dangerous.

My brother does not use the internet, he does not have internet at home, and his children go to a chassidishe yeshiva where they do not have internet. All this is perfectly congruent. His children get a very consistent and clear message.

We raised our children differently. At a certain age, we did allow supervised internet use, and eventually on their own. I am constantly engaged with technology. I would like to think that my children have a congruent message. You cannot bring up kids like my brothers’ in my home because you cannot tell them that the internet is treif while you are on it very often. You should tell

them that it has dangerous potential, but the message needs to be given carefully, with subtlety and a tremendous amount of chochma because there is nothing more damaging to a child than a message that is inconsistent, as it erodes everything you tell them.

**Q) SHOULD I SNOOP THROUGH MY CHILD’S SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS? HOW SHOULD THIS BE DONE? SHOULD I TELL THEM THAT I WILL BE SNOOPING? OR SHOULD I DO IT BEHIND THEIR BACK?**

A) Trust is something that takes a lifetime to build, but can be lost in a snap of a finger. Adolescence summed up in 30 seconds: “You want to be 21 and your parents want you to be 6. Do you know how you can get to 21 faster? As soon as your parents trust you, you are 21. Once your parents really trust you, you will basically get almost everything you want. If they do not trust you, you will never get it until you are married or out of the house.

Would not you prefer to be there when they make the mistakes so as to guide them and teach them how to rectifying their blunders?

So remember that. Do not ever lie to your parents. Build a relationship with them even though it can be messy and hard.”

I do recommend checking up on your children, but tell them what you are doing. Explain the rules of the game to them. “Here is how I am going to be supervising your use.” If they do not like something, work it out with them. You are the boss and you get to make the rules at the end of the day, but I encourage you to do it in front of them and not snoop behind their back. Could you imagine having this talk with your child after they found out you snooped on them? How would you feel if someone went through your diary? The conversation never lasts a tenth of a second about what that was about. Your child is going to start screaming about trust.

Please see to it that you understand the technology. Either you or your spouse, someone needs to know what is going on. If not, there is a tremendous disconnect once your children get older and into the technology because you not knowledgeable enough about it to be able supervise them effectively. How can you supervise without understanding the technology? Finally, it is very important to explain to your child, especially your teenage daughter, that all info and pictures shared on social media could be disseminated all over even if your child later deletes them. This is very important as teens are all about “now” and ramifications in the future of present actions are often difficult for them to grasp.

**Q) HOW DO I RESPOND TO “BUT EVERYONE ELSE HAS IT”?**

A) Be in touch with other parents. Do a little bit of homework, and find out what is going on in the class. “Everyone has it” might mean two or three kids. Schools make their own rules also, but as I explained, rules made with the children’s input are followed more. Get together with some of your child’s friends’ parents and decide together when you think your children should get access to: a, b, and/or c. If you get quite a few of you together, you might be able to set up a policy that will be uniform for all the children.

**Q) WHAT DO WE DO WHEN OUR PHILOSOPHY ON THIS ISSUE DOES NOT MESH WITH THAT OF OUR SCHOOL’S?**

A) If a school has policies that you do not agree with, you should either get in line with the school’s policy or send your child to another school. Please do not go against school policies. It is incredibly destructive. You cannot send your child to school and say “this is the man or woman I want you to listen to, and that you should respect”, and then completely undermine whatever they are doing. We can disagree with school

policies. We can tell children that we disagree with certain policies, but the bottom line is, “these are the rules, and if the school does not change its policy, these will be the rules that we will follow”.

**CONCLUSION: THINKING ABOUT THE LONG TERM VS. THE SHORT TERM**

A parent needs to plan ahead. If our daughter is in grade 9 and I know that in four years, I will have no supervision of her, I need to start preparing her now

## GUIDING OUR CHILDREN IN A MODERN WORLD

BY RABBI YAAKOV HOROWITZ | ADAPTED FROM A SHIUR

for that time. If I never let her drive a car or go to the mall, how will she learn to make good choices? Children need to learn how to make good choices. I believe this can be done in a series of ways: For example, driving, using the internet, and going to the mall.

1) When the children are young, model how to drive safely and defensively, how to use the internet for productive and kosher matters, and how often to go to the mall, what to buy that is absolutely *tzniusdik* and not borderline, how to feel happy when you forego something you like that is not *tzniusdik*, and how to behave at the mall, not scream on the phone, laugh uncontrollably, etc.

2) When the children are older, you should let them drive, use the internet, and go to the mall under your supervision.

3) Finally, when they are older, they will have the knowledge and tools to be able to drive safely, use the internet appropriately, and go to the mall and buy only *tzniusdik* items. The same concept applies to preparing your children for everything else in life. It is important to supervise, but if you do not prepare the child for their future, you have lost the war. You have won this small battle, but the big war has been lost.

When a child is in grade 11 or 12 and you start to give them privileges, most often and they will make a few mistakes. Would you not prefer to be there when they make the mistakes so as to guide them and teach them how to rectifying their blunders? This is the time to have the discussions so you can help them make the right decisions. Real parenting is teaching, modeling, guiding, supervising, and rectifying in a positive, joyful way.

All this should be done gradually before the children leave their home to go away to school, as teachers—however good they are—cannot be expected to replace their students' parents.

### THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM RABBI HOROWITZ'S INTERNET POLICY FOR YESHIVAS DARCHI NOAM WHERE HE SERVES AS DEAN:

- 1) No computers with internet in your rooms – only in family rooms.
- 2) Filters on house computers.
- 3) You can only use the internet with a parent sitting next to you. I made these rules for your safety.
- 4) No more private e-mail addresses for kids – only family email addresses – so that you can still get e-mails, but with your parents' supervision. You can tell whoever sends you e-mail to put your name in the subject line, and then your brothers and sisters will not open it. But your parents can, to see that the people sending you e-mails are people they are comfortable with.
- 5) No YDN talmidim are allowed to have Facebook, MySpace, or Twitter accounts (or any others like it).
- 6) No YDN talmidim will have their own personal cell phones. Instead, should your parents wish to provide you with a cell phone when you leave your home, it will be a "family" cell phone – and will not have internet connectivity or texting capacity. Additionally, as in the past, no cell phones can be brought to school or any yeshiva function, such as Bar Mitzvos or trips.

TEXT PREPARED BY MISS ESTHER ROCHEL ELKAIM

## INSPIRATION FROM ANASH

Before my children went off to school at out of town, I established a rule that they had to call me every day. They worried about what we could possibly talk about every day. We usually didn't speak about issues, but it did open the doors of communication if issues did come up. Kids can be quite good at covering up what they want hide, but, as a parent, you also begin to see a pattern in the daily routine, which changes when something is astray or in their tone of voice. It isn't always the words that are said, but the messages behind the words. This requires quantity-time over quality-time. In the end I knew the yeshiva's daily menu quite well!

MRS. BRACHA BETTOUN

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