

Turning Points with life coach Randy Nathan

Dear Coach Randy,
I just started my senior year in high school and met with my guidance counselor. Why does it seem that everyone else knows where they want to go to college but me? I have no idea where I want to go.

Please Help

Dear Help,
Your senior year is certainly an exciting time. It's a period in life like no other. It's an ending, yet also the beginning of your next phase in life. It makes complete sense that you are going through some confusion.

What an opportunity you have at this very moment: You have the ability to choose where you want to go and what you want to do. To help you decide, you may want to consider doing something called "visualization." Find a place where you can be and have some time to yourself without being interrupted. Set a timer for 10-20 minutes; then get into a comfortable position — either sitting cross-legged or lying down — and close your eyes. Keep your breathing natural and slow and begin to think about who you are, what you want, and where you see yourself next year. Don't fight anything; just let the thoughts and images come into and out of your mind. Pay attention to your senses — what do you see, hear, feel, smell, and taste?

When the timer goes off, grab a notepad and start writing down everything you saw, heard, etc. Just let the thoughts come out, whether they make sense or not. Then schedule an appointment with your guidance counselor and share your visualization experience. Good luck.

Dear Coach Randy,
I've been in college now for a month, and I'm having problems with my roommate. I find myself getting frustrated and angry. I don't know what to do.

Going Crazy

Dear Going Crazy,
Welcome to one of the biggest challenges of college life: the freshman roommate. This is one of those situations that cannot really be dealt with or prepared for prior to experiencing it. Even if you've gone to overnight camp, it's just not the same. You are placed in a small room with someone you've never met and are expected to live in harmony and tranquility. You have different study habits, lifestyles, personalities, and tastes — it's no wonder you are going a little "crazy." But it doesn't mean it has to stay this way.

When we get upset or frustrated by other people, it's often because we interpret what they do and say. In other words, it's not so much them as it is us. The trick here is not to take it personally. In coaching we do something called "reframing." This is a process that allows us to look at a situation or comment from a different perspective. Basically it's turning negatives into positives. When your roommate comes in with people who look a little different or "weird," you have a choice. You can think, "Oh, no, not again; these people are bizarre," or you can reframe the situation and say, "This is an opportunity to meet some new people" or "My roommate has a right to have friends and a social life, just like me." Reframing can be very powerful if you allow it to become part of your way of thinking.

Don't take things personally and try to reframe things as needed. You'll find your energy and happiness will be greater when you do.

Randy Nathan, MSW, is a certified empowerment coach who works with high school and college-aged students. Through the coaching process, he empowers and motivates young people to face the major challenges, transitions, and opportunities in their lives. For further information, visit www.yppoach.com.



Have a question for Coach Randy? High school students and college-age people can contact him by writing to RealLife@njewishnews.com.

Young children and prayer

by Lyndall Miller

Can young children pray? To answer this question, we must first consider what it means to pray. Many authorities define praying as a reaching out beyond the self, a conversation with God. To keep up their end of the conversation, adults are expected to offer praise and thanks for what God has done for them and make requests or confessions of shortcomings. L'hitpalel, the Hebrew word meaning "to pray," is reflexive, implying that prayer involves self-examination. In other words, what we tell God is based on what we understand about ourselves.

What about the young child? He or she may not yet be able to achieve — never mind articulate — an awareness of the self, so how can we ask them to pray? With that young child, we can start with God's side of the conversation. As we teach them about what God has done for all people and for klal Yisrael (the community of Israel), how God is always there when we need a friend, and how wonderful it feels to sing about God with our families and friends, we establish a reason to pray that can last a lifetime.

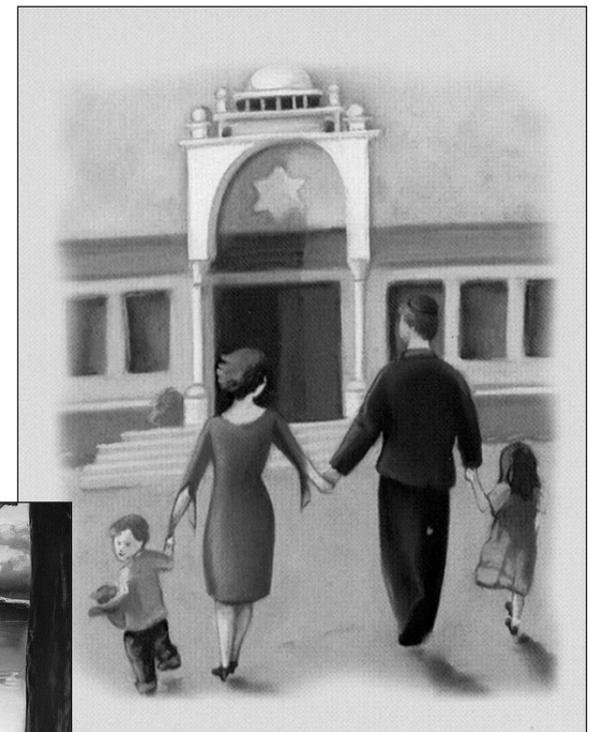
We have the inspiring task of helping God talk to children so that they will want to initiate their own conversations. Children five years old and under are uniquely equipped to listen, partly because the bounds of the self are not so firmly set; they can travel out to meet God with an ease that we could envy. They understand with their intuition, not just with their analytical thinking — they do not stop to filter everything through a conceptual screen. They can experience the feelings of a prayer and not just "perform" it as an intellectual exercise. Therefore, through prayer, they can actually sense God's nearness.

We can encourage these feelings of nearness to God through stimulating children's wonderful sense of imagination. In the realm of spirituality, "imagine" does not mean "pretend" but rather that a meaningful image of God or of significant human figures or events has been created. The prayers themselves show us how to lead children into these images through what the words describe. We "see" all of the Jewish

people together in their tents, we envision the beautiful world that God has given us, we experience Moses leading us through the sea to freedom.

Indeed, when we pray with children, they can take us places we would have difficulty going by ourselves! Children's services should be designed with the spiritual abilities of young children in mind. The prayers can be selected and presented in a way that will engage the imaginations and feelings of the participants. I hope that you and your children will often feel God there, listening and being involved in the "conversations."

Lyndall Miller is an early childhood consultant with the Auerbach Agency for Jewish Education in Philadelphia. This article originally appeared in The Philadelphia Jewish Voice.



Scenes from *Happy Birthday, World: A Rosh Hashanah Celebration* by Latifa Berry Kropf, illustrated by Lisa Carlson

Web source of the week

FamilyEducation.com

This attractive, well-organized site has lots of information for three specific age groups — infant to six, seven to 11, and 12 to 18 — as well as articles for moms (why are dads always left out of the loop?).

According to its mission statement, the site aims to serve as "an on-line consumer network of the world's best learning and information resources, personalized to help parents, teachers, and students of all ages take control of their learning and make it part of their everyday lives."

There's more to FamilyEducation than, well, education. Recent topics included teaching good sportsmanship to younger kids, autumn activities for middlers and teens, and jobs for the "older" crowd.

— RON KAPLAN

FamilyEducation

Your Turn

Real Life welcomes guest columnists. If you'd like to share your experiences, your outlook, or a moment in your life, e-mail reallife@njewishnews.com for column guidelines. Real Life is edited by Ron Kaplan.

Torah haiku

by Ron Kaplan

I pity the one
who lifts the Torah these days:
A bit one-sided.