

Ask Miriam...

Individuals and families in the community are faced with challenging issues and concerns regarding their social, emotional and psychological health. Through the cooperation of **The Jewish World**, Miriam Adler of the Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

Q. Dear Miriam,

We wanted to get a head start on Passover preparations. As our family grows, we have a wonderful family gathering for holidays. Our celebration is truly intergenerational, and that is the good news and the bad news. There has to be a way to balance between the needs and enjoyment of the young children and the adults at a seder.

Do you have any suggestions about how to do this?

I am asking you this because I suspect that people management is more the issue than religious celebration.

Getting Ready for Passover

A. Dear Getting Ready,

How wonderful that you will have a houseful. I think you are correct about needing to know how to manage all of the ages, expectations, and the celebration itself.

The seder does not have to be geared to the very young children, a mistake I think many people make. For children below about five, it is unrealistic to try and adjust a seder to meet their attention span and understanding. Try to put together something for them before the regular seder which introduces them to the holiday and incorporates some of the traditions. However, once they are ready to give up for the night, let them go.

For the older children and adults, ahead of the seder, give them appropriate parts to prepare. Everyone should feel included and be able to participate at their own level. A seder should be a learning and participatory experience for all ages.

Q. Dear Miriam,

Our family is having the seders at our home this year. Our son's wife converted to Judaism. Her siblings and parents are joining us at the seder. Holiday celebrations have been uncomfortable at times and we would like these seders to be a good experience for all. Do you have any suggestions about how to make this happen?

Anticipating the Holiday

A. Dear Anticipating the Holiday,

I suggest that you follow some of the advice I gave to the previous question.

A lot of the discomfort could be alleviated by giving everyone who is coming a role in the seder. Just because someone is not Jewish does not mean that he or she can't participate.

Check with your rabbi about the parts of the seder which would be appropriate for non-Jewish guests to participate in. But, remember to discuss this with the relatives and guests ahead of time so they can prepare and feel that they are an important part of the celebration.

Miriam Adler, A.C.S.W., C.S.W., is assistant director of J.F.S. She answers most frequently asked questions. Please send questions to "Ask Miriam," c/o Jewish Family Services of NENY, 877 Madison Ave., Albany, NY 12208 or e-mail madler@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.

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