

## 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**, Jewish Family Services will offer responses.

### **Q. Dear Miriam,**

*The end of school is coming and with it the pressures of childcare. I am a single parent with custody of my 9-year-old son. During the year he goes to an after school program. In the past summers, he has attended a day camp.*

*He is refusing to go to camp this summer and I don't know how to convince him to go. Do you have any suggestions about how to remedy this situation?*

*Summer Dilemma*

### **A. Dear Summer Dilemma,**

First, I think you need to listen to his reasons for not wanting to go to camp. Is his decision based on a bad experience last year? Does he need a change from so much structure? What is he saying he wants to do? Since I assume you are expending funds to send him to camp, can you mix and match with some camp and some private childcare?

Can you take some vacation to be home with him for some of the time?

Of course the bottom line is that you need childcare, but if he feels he has some input and it is reasonable you will try to make it happen. However, if your only choice is to send him to day camp, he needs to go and you should not feel guilty and overcompensate on other issues because of it.

• • • •

### **Q. Dear Miriam,**

*We have a sixteen-year-old daughter and a 10-year-old son. They have always been in camp during the summer as we both work full time.*

*Each summer one of us has individually been able to take some vacation time in addition to a family vacation during the summer.*

*Our daughter wants to stay home and work this summer. She doesn't want to work at a camp.*

*We can be overprotective at times, so we want to know if letting her work is a good idea?*

*Conflicted Parents*

### **A. Dear Conflicted Parents,**

Sixteen is certainly an age at which you can leave a child on his/her own

Now for the hard decisions.

Other than your protective instincts, do you have reason to be concerned about your daughter's behavior? Has she been on her own during the school year? Do you have expectations/rules already in place for her regarding people in the house, keeping you informed of her whereabouts, etc.?

I think that a sixteen-year-old who wants to work should be encouraged to do so even if finances are not an issue. It is an opportunity to establish a work ethic to teach her how to handle money.

Before she starts working, it is advisable to have a clear understanding of your rules regarding going and coming from work and being in contact with you. How her salary will be used is also something that should be established prior to starting the job. These issues should be worked out with her so there is some give and take. Be ready to negotiate keeping in mind your bottom line.

This can be an opportunity for her to begin the process of being an independent person.

• • • •

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](mailto:madler@jfsneny.org) or call 518-482-8856.