

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,

My husband and I have a child who is old enough to start Hebrew school in the fall. We are both Jewish, but I have much more of commitment to teaching Judaism to the child and carrying out our traditions. My husband has made it clear that enrolling our child in Hebrew school is my choice and that he won't be involved in it.

This makes me feel resentful which I realize can spill over into other parts of our relationship.

What can I do to get him more involved?

Frustrated Mom

A. Dear Frustrated Mom,

Your need to feel ok about your decision to enroll your child in a Hebrew school. I think you should ask your husband to respect your decision and to keep an open mind about the experience. You are asking him to be supportive of this decision so as not to create a negative environment for your child. You also have a right to ask his participation in whatever your child does because you operate as a family.

There are, or will be, things that he feels your child should be involved in that you don't feel as strongly about, but will support because you are a family.

Hopefully, with time and with your keeping him involved, he will learn to appreciate the learning and joy your child will have in exploring his/her heritage.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

We have two children, a boy and a girl.

Our son just seems to be able to do life right. He is a good student, has friends, loves athletics, etc.

Our daughter is a good student, but otherwise is a very difficult child. She is moody, argumentative, loses friendships, and doesn't get involved in outside activities very easily.

The problem is that my wife in trying to motivate her is constantly lauding our son. This makes matters worse and makes their relationship very strained and negative.

What can we do to handle such different children in ways that are healthier and will stop some of the rivalry between them?

Parents of Opposites

A. Dear Parents of Opposites,

You seem to have a better realization of the problem than your wife does. Perhaps she responds to your daughter in this way out of anger or frustration. It is not uncommon when dealing with a difficult child to feel burdened and angry.

You should discuss this situation with your wife in a way that is understanding and supportive. The goal is to have a joint approach to the children. Perhaps you could develop some signals with your wife that you both agree upon which will move the discussion to another level when it becomes negative.

Avoid any comparisons of the two children in front of them. They are individuals and need to be treated separately.

Children should be praised for their accomplishments and helped to understand and be responsible for behaviors that need changing.

You need to help the two of them have common connections that are positive and not competitive. This can be accomplished by creating family experiences that everyone can participate in with a sense of pleasure and appreciation of each other. For example, create your own family Passover seder or do a community project as a family.

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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