

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,

Our son is a sophomore at college. He completed his first year with a less than stellar performance. He agreed to try again. Now at the end of the first semester he has made some poor judgments, which have resulted in his receiving a disciplinary record.

He wants to leave school.

We are afraid that if he leaves school and doesn't take at least a few courses, he will never go back to school.

If he is to get anywhere he needs a college education.

What can we do to keep him involved, even at a minimal level, in school?

Heartsick Parents

A. Dear Heartsick Parents,

I know that you want the best for your son, but it is your agenda that he finish school. His behaviors tell you that he is not motivated to be in school at this time.

If he is to succeed in life he will have to take responsibility for himself including his education. He might need some maturity and life experience first which he should gain by getting out on his own in the world.

By giving our children all of the opportunities, sometimes they don't learn to value the experience.

He needs to know you care about him, but let him earn your respect by making and following through on decisions. Perhaps he should withdraw from school before he sabotages his study any further.

Work with him to make a plan that includes supporting himself and not living at home. He needs some timeframes either to return to school or to find an acceptable alternative. You are available for support, advice, help with problem solving, but not to bail him out of situations resulting from poor judgment.

You need to help him learn to take care of himself, not do it for him.

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Q. Dear Miriam,

With the holiday season upon us, I am concerned about my four-year-old's exposure only to Christmas. We are new to this area and have no family here. We plan to wait to join a synagogue until she starts school because our finances are tight.

At home, we talk about Chanukah, read stories, and will light the menorah. Where can we find community celebrations or programs to take part in if we are not members of a synagogue?

Parents Looking for Chanukah

A. Dear Parents,

There are a number of things you can do. Most of the congregations welcome non-members to programs. You need to call and find out when they will take place. There may be a charge, but it will be worth it to start meeting other young families. Also check the Jewish Community Centers for programs.

I know that there are grandparents in the community who don't have grandchildren in the area and many would like to adopt families for holiday celebrations. Check with the congregations to see if they know of any such families.

Assisted living facilities and nursing homes frequently welcome families to come and help make a holiday festive for residents. You can also volunteer to be a "chaplain" and receive an assignment to visit older adults in the community who don't have relatives to celebrate with. Some of these experiences may develop into lasting relationships.

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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 madler@jfsneny.org or call 518-482-8856.

ask Miriam for 12/02/04