

# What Ever Happened to Training a Child According to His Way

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***Parents need to wake up. If kids aren't interested in learning, there is a REASON for it (especially if they are on vacation)!***

Last week something really exciting happened! I finally put a very important concept from my Parenting / Homeschooling Mentor group into Action!

One of the things our mentor, Chana Rus Cohen, keeps reminding us about is the concept of inspiring, rather than requiring from our kids. In other words, we want to inspire our kids to learn, not require it of them. As a bonus, this helps their

natural genius unfold organically.

We do this by serving as an example to our children through doing the things we want them to be doing.

This means that we keep learning and growing too. We also support rather than enforce their learning interests by planning, sourcing books and other resources, being present for them, setting up a functional and inspiring work environment, taking day trips, helping them get hands on involvement in their interests, and offering guidance.

Enter: my 14 year old son who just graduated 8<sup>th</sup> grade with five weeks off of school. Straight A student, loved and admired by his teachers, super talented with a lot of leadership and shall we say – entertainment skills. Anyway, for the first almost two weeks of his vacation, this boy did not learn one word of Torah. Not one word. He got up every day for davening, prayed in a minyan three times a day. But no learning. I was starting to get so annoyed. I tried bribing him, taking away privileges, harassing him. Nothing worked.

Finally, the light bulb went on and Chana Rus's teachings of inspire not require came to the forefront of my mind. I thought about this kid and what he actually loves to do. Well, he does enjoy public speaking and entertaining, that's for sure...

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That very day he had gone to an introductory day at next year's high school yeshiva. My husband asked him over dinner, "So what did the Rosh Yeshiva speak to you about today?" He immediately jumped up and went straight into explaining the laws of the nine days of mourning, as they apply to certain obscure situations. He knew it cold. He explained this very

clearly and in such an interesting way.

I then asked him if anyone else other than the Rosh Yeshiva taught them. He said that yes, and proceeded to tell us a story, a dvar Torah, and an explanation about the difficulty in new beginnings and why next year will be challenging at first but how this is normal and what to do about it. His speaking skills never cease to amaze me.

And that's when it dawned on me: I will ask him if he would teach me Torah every day. Some parsha, more laws about the 9 days of mourning; his favorite mishnayos and Gemaras from this past year.

I said, "Would you be willing to teach me some Torah once a day? The way you give it over is so interesting and when I learn Torah alone, i have a hard time understanding a lot of it".

Now this was something that he could actually get into and enjoy. Teaching, showing off his knowledge and how well he can give it over. Yes, this he was more than happy to do! So now, once a day, we have a little Torah session going. He teaches me and he gets to understand the Torah teachings on a deeper level because that is what happens when you teach something.

Wow.

Who did I think this child was to try and bribe or harass him into learning Torah? How ridiculous is that? What good would come out of such a thing? Sometimes I wonder if I'm brain dead. Unfortunately, I'm not the only one treating my child in this way.

Which brings me to the question – what ever happened to the teaching in Mishley 22\6. "Train a child according to his way; even when he grows old, he will not turn away from it."

Does anyone do this anymore? I know that the schools don't,

but how many parents out there are putting this verse into action?

The GRA says about this verse that a parent must raise and teach a child in accordance with his nature and natural inclination and in this way, when he grows older, he will not turn away from the way he was raised. However, should a parent force a child to go against his nature, even through the child will listen to him when he is younger, once he grows older, he will turn away from the way he was raised and what he was taught since it is impossible for someone to go against their nature.

Parents need to wake up. If kids aren't interested in learning, there is a REASON for it (especially if they are on vacation). Bribing, forcing or demeaning kids to learn anything is useless and a very detrimental thing to do for the long run if you really think about it. Parents must take responsibility to figure out what will make a child WANT to learn. And if they can't figure it out, they shouldn't expect their child to figure out how to want to learn something that they are not interested in either.

Next time your child seems uninterested in learning Torah, studying for a math test, doing his required reading, etc. Remember: inspire not require. Think about what makes this child tick, how you can inspire him by personal example, and of course, ask Hashem for help in training your child according to his way.