

to screens, children *will* learn how to entertain themselves in other ways. You will not need to become a full-time entertainer.

There is so much available: games, toys, books, coloring, CDs, crafts, telephone hotlines, bikes, balls, entertaining younger children, playing with neighbors, etc. Of course, there's also homework, helping their mother, or doing *chessed* out of the home — all things that are so beneficial to children and much easier to do if there is no pull of the screen.

Speaking from Experience

Alienation

Issue #689

While the saga related was painful to read and even more so, I'm sure, to experience, I take exception to the protagonist's description of her children's experience when she took in her brother's family. Of course these changes affected them! Their parents were no longer available to be the empty-nest *bubby* and *zeydy* they previously had been.

Their parents were scrimping and saving for their cousin's wedding, instead of buying gifts for their grandkids or any of the other little ways grandparents help their children and grandchildren, be it with time, money, or attention. These kids were effectively replaced by another family!

Additionally, it is very possible that they did voice their concerns previously in a very respectful manner and were brushed off by the grandmother who didn't realize the

strong feelings behind them. In no way am I casting all the blame on her, but for her not to take any responsibility is immature and unhelpful.

I'm curious as to what her attitude toward solving emotional problems was before this occurred. Was she open to Rabbinical mediation or family therapy in the past?

Did she herself seek advice of others and share those experiences with her children? It's difficult to imagine that children who were raised by a mother who frequently demonstrated how to solve conflicts

the fictional characters — because nobody is exclusively one or the other. While writing good articles and novels is a daunting task, it is also an awesome responsibility, and focusing exclusively on the dysfunction without naming it as such is doing a disservice to those who may be in such a situation and wondering why they're not managing to have healthy relationships.

*Thank you,
Dinah Sawyer*

Chinuch Coach

In every story about a relationship, there are the two sides and the truth. While this story shared one side, it left no room for any understanding of the other side.

Issue #687

The poem "Does My Teacher Know?" that was featured in your magazine recently was included in my daughter's end-of-year packet. It was written perfectly! Exactly what we, and I'm sure everyone else, has been thinking! How thoughtful of the teachers to include this and show us and our daughters that they understand. My daughter was thrilled, so I'd like to extend a big thank you to *Binah* for enabling this.

Shout out to all the dedicated teachers working in these difficult times!

*S.L.
Manchester, England*

in a healthy manner would not try to take those steps with her now.

In every story about a relationship, there are the two sides and the truth. While this story shared one side, it left no room for any understanding of the other side. This portrayal of a one-sided dysfunctional relationship echoes Rivka Recht's inbox letter about "Sisters and Strangers." Depicting these dysfunctional relationships without clarifying the inherent problems ends up normalizing the dysfunction for those embroiled in similar relationships.

Nobody should be considered totally in the right or totally in the wrong. Not this grandmother, and not

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RESPONSES
TO
ALIENATED
BINAH
MAGAZINE

Alienated

Issue #689

How tragically appropriate that this article and the letter received in response were both printed right before the Three Weeks, a time when we mourn the *galus* and all it has done to our nation.

Living so long in *galus* amongst the nations
Has influenced our thoughts and emotions

The influences so subtle and so strong
That we've come to mix up right and wrong.

We've learned from the world to say:
Blame the parents in every way!
They didn't model conflict resolution
And don't deserve a chance for a solution!

How do I know this to be true?
My feeling tells me what to do!
And I must follow my heart
Per a psychology upstart.

Fear of sin and punishment?
How old-fashioned; I'm current
Therapist and client are aware
We need happiness and self-care.

I can't give in and become a doormat!
Kibbud av va'eim... what's that?
Ask a *Gadol* with sheltered Torah views?
My therapist keeps up with all the news!

Say it! Print it! Don't hold back!
Cause pain and damage with attack
Bad becomes good and good is bad
Kill my parents if they make me mad.

Oy, mah hayah lanu in galus!
Woe, what has become of us!
How low have we sunk
On wrong ideas we are drunk.

For this we all should mourn
Yidden and families are torn
So much damage has been done
And more potentially, *Rachmana litzlan.*

Anonymous

As a parent who has experienced the alienation of her children, I have been following your article and letters on this topic with much interest.

I was surprised to see a letter from a reader challenging the innocence of

the protagonist. She wants your readership to see the possibility that the mother may have contributed to the loss of her children. Although that possibility exists, what the story was presenting was true alienation — in other words, the presence of a third party. It is this third party who influenced the children's decisions.

The mother clearly stated, "Initially, my own kids were terrific." It's not like this was a home where children were detached. Furthermore, as she started to notice "cold stares," she felt very shook up. Again, coldness was not a part of their life. So what gave?

The mother said that she learned that the children went to see "a third party," a self-identified psychotherapist, who planted seeds of resentment.

Planting ideas in the children's minds is at the root of alienation.

Alienation is a process. It begins by putting one's subject under a spell of feeling powerful. Offering sympathy and praise are common tactics used. This sense of empowerment works similarly to a drug. Once the child experiences this high, it's extremely difficult to shed this feeling. Unfortunately, just as addicts lie to cover their secret, so too will alienated children go to extremes to maintain their position.

Please do not judge anyone who is experiencing this horrific trauma. Most likely, they love their children dearly and are suffering greatly while being unable to connect to them.

May we all see a *yeshuah* soon.

A mother who knows the pain,
A.R.

to-wall bookcases full of his beloved *sefarim*, as well as the overflow of those *sefarim* piled high on every available surface, I was astounded to see that not even one of the *sefarim* had fallen to the floor.

Miriam, I'm sure you and your husband (who was good friends with my brother) will remember my father. Thanks for reminding me of that day, a different season but the recollection rings true!

Mrs. Zissel Keller

Binah Staff on a Diet

I've been greatly enjoying Tanya's column. She wrote that exercise, when done regularly, will not impact weight loss. Moreover, I have discovered that excessive exercise is sometimes associated with weight gain. Why is this? Thank you.

Ilana

Great question!

1. You may be building muscle, which is worth it in terms of looking leaner and having an increased metabolism but CAN make the numbers go up.

2. Some people get hungry after working out — even all day, not just right after — so they end up eating more than they should.

3. You may be justifying more food by saying "I worked out, I need more food/I deserve this."

Tanya

I've been following Tanya's column for a while now, and I really enjoy it. It's amazing to follow the participants' progress as it's happening.

She mentioned in one of her recent articles that sudden changes in eating habits can be due to pregnancy. I was wondering if she has any tips or suggestions for someone who is pregnant and is very nauseous and is finding it difficult to maintain a healthy diet.

Thank you so much,
Name withheld

Every person is different, so when I work with someone one-on-one, I customize my response. General advice would be to eat small, frequent meals and stick to proteins that don't nauseate you, such as beans, cheese or almonds versus chicken or fish.

Good luck,

Tanya

As Tanya predicted, I'm writing in about her column encouraging thin women to lose weight. But I'm not writing to criticize.

I'm actually really glad that you've brought this up, and here's why. The messages we send each other, as a society, are that we should be comfortable with our bodies, whatever shape and size they are; accept our weight; like ourselves how we are; the goal is not to be thin but to be healthy, etc. Sounding familiar?

But when we speak to ourselves, we tell another story. One of wanting to lose every last gram, of not being okay with gaining even a drop or needing to restrict and count calories and fit into a certain size. But because we're not fat, we think we have to be grateful and don't have a "right" to diet. So we do it anyway, but secretly, guiltily, shamefully. Often, in unsafe ways and not stopping when we should.

As someone who has been stuck in this system of mixed messages for way too long, with too much damage, I'm realizing that there is a middle ground between living with some extra weight and becoming anorexic. And that it's okay for a woman to want to look and feel her best. *As long as we do it responsibly.*

And that's why I appreciate Tanya's putting it out there, as she's helping us do what we were trying to do anyway, in a safe, healthy and more effective way.

I'm not talking about those people who really need to lose weight for health reasons, or the ones who are happy with their bodies. Those people

who I am talking about, you know who you are. And you're not alone.

Recovering From an Eating Disorder

Alienated

Issue #689

When I first read this story, I was so shaken and couldn't get to myself. *What a horrific story*, I thought. But then, when I reread the story, I realized that a huge part of the story just doesn't make sense. The kids are a bunch of adults who made the decision to alienate their parents. The pain that this alienation causes the parents cannot be described. However, I want people to realize that it's painful for the kids too.

Kids (yes, even adult kids) need the connection to their parents for their emotional wellbeing (so do their kids, the grandchildren). Why would a bunch of healthy adults who had a warm, loving relationship with their parents for many years suddenly alienate their parents? Is it possible that the relationship between them wasn't very warm and close to begin with? Is it possible for a therapist to destroy a perfectly healthy relationship to this extent?

The parents did a selfless act of kindness, taking in their nieces and nephews who needed a home. If the kids would've been healthy adults, they would've appreciated the enormous *chessed* their parents were doing and would have managed without their parents' attention/money/gifts etc.

In the story — told from the mother's point of view — the kids acted unbelievably selfishly. While they felt neglected, in no way does that justify their behavior! That's why it's very obvious that a significant part of the story was missing. Yes, the story was heartbreaking... from the mother's part. Now, I would really, really like to hear the other side of the story.

Sincerely,
Anonymous