

children, and having a good marriage? Would you say the same to a cancer patient who needs to be in isolation in order to heal? Now that he had the space to heal, my husband is a different person, our marriage is finally healthy, and our children have a father.

I understand why people who aren't directly involved would call it manipulation, especially if the parents are respected and beloved to those who don't know them well enough — but remember, you should never judge a person. And if a competent therapist and rav are involved, trust that they know something you may not.

Another point I want to make is that perhaps not everyone needs therapy, but everyone needs guidance. Those who reach out for help to a mentor, rav, or therapist are people who are looking to grow and become better people. It's something to admire.

Maybe one day I will share my story publicly or write a book because the time has come to stop shoving things under the rug and stop judging those who are brave enough to work through their weaknesses.

B.K.

Relationship is the Ultimate Goal

[Counterpoint / When Therapists Take Away Your Child – Issue 794]

I am responding to A.D.'s letter about parental alienation. He writes: "If you're wondering why your relationship with your children is respectful and cordial, but not real, warm, or loving..." A.D. captured the crux of the issue: Even if your parents were imperfect/not emotionally healthy/neglectful/abusive/fill in the blank, the Torah — and common decency — does not allow one to completely cut off a relationship with them. It may be a compromised or limited relationship, like that of A.D. with his mother, but you must still have a relationship.

Contrary to what you may be thinking,

I'm speaking from the perspective of a child of wholly imperfect parents — physically and verbally abusive and a whole lot more that I will leave up to the reader's imagination — who has been to (good) therapy and baruch Hashem came out healthy and whole. I have an excellent relationship with my parents today. Of course, our relationship is not the typical loving parent-to-child sort; sometimes I feel that I'm the adult in the relationship, and at times my interactions with them come from a place of pity. But that's exactly what the world has to know: The goal of proper, healthy therapy is to enable you to have the best possible relationship with your parents under the circumstances.

This involves, but is not limited to, learning to understand where your parents come from and acknowledging that they did the best they could considering their limitations or handicaps, and working hard to let go of your anger and accept that this was Hashem's plan for you. It may also involve learning to recognize your triggers and setting healthy and clear boundaries in a respectful way.

If you are in therapy, whether as a teen or an adult, you must take responsibility for your own life and ask yourself: Is my therapist causing me to move away from my parents or toward them in the long run? While it is normal and even expected to go through a period of withdrawal from your parents while you are in therapy, the overriding goal must always be a relationship.

Of course, there are extreme circumstances where a parent has a severe personality disorder and it's impossible to have a relationship with them, but that is *far* less common than we are led to believe by therapists and angry children.

One last point: The beneficiary in a relationship with parents, however limited the relationship, is the child

more than the parents. A child — even an adult child — without parents is rootless and floundering, as are grandchildren without grandparents. In a moment of heat, with the validation provided by the therapist who obviously does not have your best long-term interests in mind, you are giving up eternal bonds for generations. Total healing cannot happen when natural bonds are cut; Hashem created us to need our parents.

Alienating our parents simply allows us to stew in our resentment and feel validated that we are right and our parents were wrong. Staying in the relationship, with all the inner work it entails, may seem the more difficult route, but it's the one that leads to true, inner healing and *the menuchas hanefesh* of a life well-lived.

Name Withheld, NY

Life Altering

[Text Messages / Issue 794]

Thank you, Eytan Kobre, for highlighting the Chaburas Shas program. For me it has been life altering.

This is not an exaggeration.

While I attended yeshivah for many years and later on always learned at night, I was never able to remember what I learned. I thought my head wasn't "programmed" for remembering.

With Chaburas Shas, not only do I remember, but when I hear someone quote a Gemara that I learned, I can usually picture the words on the *daf*. I can open any Gemara that I did with the program, and in seconds it comes back, *b'siyata d'Shmaya*. For me, this adds an unbelievable new dimension of *mesikus haTorah*.

And this program is not just for *daf yomi*. It works for any and all learning, any amount.

Please try it. If it worked for me, it will work for you.

David Steinfeld, Far Rockaway, NY