

5 Ways to Make the High Holidays Meaningful for Your Family

Rosh Hashana #attitudeofgratitude

At this time of year, our relationship with G-d usually consists of a wish list. Before we ask for a sweet new year, **take time to appreciate all the blessings of our past year.**

HOW? A week before Rosh Hashana, put a shoe box in a central place in your house. Anytime anyone thinks of something they were grateful for that day, write it down and put it in. During the first meal you have with family on Rosh Hashana, have everyone read a paper. Use this activity as a springboard for further discussion of other life events you are grateful that happened this year, especially being grateful for each other.

Yom Kippur #sorrynotsorry

If we want G-d to forgive us... then **we have to forgive others.** It's time to strengthen relationships, even the ones that aren't so comfortable or when you know you're right.

HOW? Be the bigger person. In the larger framework of life, it isn't worth harboring resentments or creating division within a family. Make an active decision to forgive past resentments and encourage your family to reach out to old friends or family members, with heartfelt sincerity to clean the slate, no matter how severed the relationship is. But don't end it there! This enforces healthy communication with your kids and can be a good time to ask forgiveness from each other, before the holiday.

Succot #disconnecttoconnect

The sukkah, a temporary dwelling place, forces us to give up our comfortable, protective homes and spend time in an unsecured shelter with just the **basic necessities.** As we sit in inside, it heightens our awareness of the material pursuits that we contend with on a daily basis.

HOW? Try to limit society's materialistic values that infiltrate our homes.

Build intangible assets. Use these tips:

1. Have a *No Phone Zone*. Decide one hour of the day where cell phones are off limits.
2. Talk to your kids about donating 10% of their earnings to the charity of their choice.

3. Try to limit your TV time. The next time you're sitting next to someone on the couch mindlessly channel surfing, turn it off and tune into each other.
4. When you decide to go to the mall with your kids just for fun, take a trip to the local food pantry instead. Turn getting into giving.

Sukkot #unconditionallove

The 3 minimum walls of a sukkah represent G-d hugging us, with metaphoric out stretched arms. This shows **G-d's unconditional love for us** and that our relationship with G-d is much like a parent/child relationship. G-d guides us; using events in our lives to help us to stay true to ourselves and developing virtues that we need to become our best selves.

HOW? Call it an *HP moment*, which stands for Hashgacha Pratit or Divine Intervention in our lives. Incorporate this term into the vernacular or your family; whenever you become aware of the small and big ways G-d intervenes in our lives, tell each other about it. You will be surprised - what might start off slow will quickly become a natural way of thinking and incorporating G-d into your lives.

Sukkot #unity

We shake a lulav on Sukkot, which gathers together four different species of branches, which represents **all different types of Jews coming together in unity**. Yes, even with everybody's differing opinions and political views!

HOW? We usually have preconceived notions of negative judgements of people. Judaism stresses that we can never truly judge someone else, ever. Exercise this by making a game with your children that when you assume something negative about someone, try to come up with any other reason that person might be acting in that way, even if it seems ridiculous! It can bring on lots of laughter but it will also completely change your perspective about people. This also helps this time period of judgement- if we judge people favorably, then we can ask G-d to judge us favorably as well.