



25 | Inside Look 27 | Counting the Days 28 | One on One 29 | Silver & Gold

teen

pages

DEAR
TEENS

As children, we're dependent on our parents to provide for our needs, but at the same time, we need to have some independence in paying our way, so we can become mature, responsible adults. How do we achieve the right balance? Should parents be expected to pay for everything they provide their children? Read on as some teens weigh in on this issue....


Daniela Thaler
Editor

Teen Voices on Money Matters

PART II

By Ahuva Sofer with Mesila Staff

"I actually learned this idea in the Mesila course we took at school," answers Yehudis, 16. " 'You'll always have everything you need and some of what you want.' That catchy phrase helps outline the boundaries for me a little better." "I think it's pretty much expected that parents should pay for the basics," adds Gitty, 19, "but, of course, who's to say what's considered necessity and what is a luxury? Is having your own cell phone a necessity? Is a pair of shoes to match your new outfit a luxury? I guess everyone has her own definition of what's what."

"Either way," adds Tirtzah, "it's important for us to remember that everything our parents give us is a gift."

Thanks, Tirtzah, for reminding us about the important appreciation factor! It helps us put things into the right perspective!

M&M: It sounds to me that you girls already have a pretty mature attitude! But is there a clear-cut right or wrong way to go about learning responsibility?

"I think every family finds its own rhythm. In our family," says Shirah, 16, "my parents are not into letting me earn my own money and pay my way. They are the type of parents who want to show that they're always available to meet my needs. But there is a downside to that also. Sometimes, I don't want to have to rely on my parents and turn to them for every single thing I want."

"It's actually the opposite with me," says Zahavah, 16. "I know my parents are under a lot of financial pressure, so I got used to spending my own money on whatever I possibly can. I know they'd love to give me the world, if they could, but financially, they're dealing with a lot, so I just don't want to bother them with every little expense. I don't think this way is totally ideal either. I mean, it's great that I'm independent, but I sometimes wish I was able to involve my parents a little more in my life."

Zahavah brought up a terrific point! It's important to be sensitive to our parents' capabilities and take responsibility. But at the same time, a teen shouldn't bite off more than she can chew. Keep the communication lines open!



M&M: It's great to learn different perspectives! But how do kids who don't have an earning system in their house avoid becoming spoiled?

"Earning your spending money isn't the only way to grow up and learn responsibility," says Shirah. "For example, taking on real Pesach cleaning jobs at home and helping your grandparents are examples of other ways you can learn to be responsible."

"You become spoiled if you get everything, no questions asked," says Zeesy.

"I agree," says Zahavah. "I have friends who might actually get more from their parents because they come from a higher-income bracket. But their parents don't give them everything they want, even though it might not appear that way, and they don't expect everything, either. And another thing — even though they have money, they're not obsessed with it and they don't look down at other people for having less."

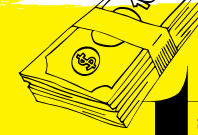


Money is as important as we make it, wouldn't you agree?

M&M: Most of you are within the same age range, more or less. Do you think these principles apply to kids of all ages?

"Of course, younger kids are more dependent," says Bracha. "They don't have much of their own money and if they did, they wouldn't really know how to spend or save it. As kids get older, they learn when to spend their own money on small extras and when to put away money for something bigger."

"When my sister came home from seminary," says Gitty, "she got her own job and started paying for her own things because she assumed she should. Now that I'm in the same position, we made up that I would spend my own money on a third of my clothes shopping, doing things with friends, and filling up the car



money matters

Mishpacha

with gas from time to time. I always know that if I fall short for something reasonable, I can bring it up with my parents."

M&M: Do the standards necessarily have to be dependent on the income bracket kids are from? Should kids from wealthier homes also learn how to earn for "extras"?

"I think that learning how to work for what we want, in general, is a great way to train kids to be responsible," says Bracha. "And that doesn't go just for kids from lower-income families."

"Being too dependent on others for things is not healthy for *anyone*," adds Gitty. "So this is something all kids, even those from wealthier families, would do well knowing from the get-go."

You'd be surprised, but the principles of dealing with money apply equally to everyone, no matter how much or how little you have!

M&M: Do you think there might be a danger in a child having unlimited control over his money? For example, should parents regulate what kids do with the money they earned themselves?

"I think letting kids use their judgment and spend their money how they want is really what's best for them," says Gitty. "Money is a tool, and the only way they can learn how to use it is by working with it."

"It's a good idea to give some guidance, because children don't yet have the experience to make the best decisions," says Tirtzah. "But we all learn best by making our own mistakes. And I don't really think there's a danger that a kid will squander his entire hard-earned stash. In the worst-case scenario, if they do make a big mistake, they'll have learned a lesson for life: Once you spend it, it's gone."

"I think parents should have an element of control over the way their kids use the money," argues Bracha. "Look, in real life, you also have to learn to save up and not spend every dollar as it comes in. When parents have some control over the spending, and at the same time, work out the pros and cons of spending together with a child, kids learn important skills for the future."



So basically, we're talking about a balance: giving kids a degree of spending leeway, without totally throwing them into the water to sink or swim.

M&M: Some families choose to use an allowance system. Do you think parents should make allowance unconditional or should it be earned?

"Allowance money is easily earned, and, when given unconditionally, just as easily spent," says

Tirtzah. "I think regular allowance should come with some chores attached. That way, the child has the satisfaction of earning too."

"If the only way a child is earning money is through allowance, then it should be earned," agrees Bracha. "In real life, we work for our money, so this can be an opportunity for kids to learn important life skills."

"Earning gives more value to what you get, emotionally," adds Gitty. "I think that if a child earns it, he's more likely to think twice before spending and to make better decisions, because he's got a vested interest in it."

Easy come, easy go — true for allowance, and for lots of other things in life!

Stay tuned for next week's topic. For more information about Mesila's educational resources, contact Mesila at info@mesila.org or 02-500-0475 (Israel).

