

the art of parenting

A new six-session course from the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute



COURSE RATIONALE

In recent decades, the art of parenting has been an unnerving playground of shifting formulas and dogmas. “Ever since the turn of the twentieth century, you’ve been able to find two sides of the debate on how to parent,” says Ann Hulbert, author of *Raising America: Experts, Parents, and a Century of Advice About Children*, a book that explores the scientific claims and social visions of a plethora of experts who during the twentieth century aimed to make a science of child rearing. “One side says nurture is everything and therefore better be pretty orderly and strict, while the other side says nature will take its course and the key to parenting is the emotional bonding between parents and children.”

In this conflicting landscape of expert opinions, where can parents find the assurance they need to adopt a parenting style they can trust with the ever-so-crucial task of guiding the physical, emotional, and social development of their children?

To this end, *The Art of Parenting* provides a trusty anchor rooted in foundational principles and timeless advice culled from millennia of Jewish wisdom, as a basis for parents to explore and develop their own parenting philosophies and techniques.

Comparing winners of Nobel prizes, Oscars, and Grammys, it is clear that Jews have had a disproportional impact on the world, particularly in the arts and sciences. Might the way Jews mold their children explain this inordinate achievement?

Judaism is a parenting success story with a rich history of values transmitted from parent to child that have preserved our nation’s identity while the great and mighty civilizations of the past have vanished into dust. The Jewish people have witnessed generations of children who have respected and admired their parents—and their teachings—and have fought the societal tide to uphold values that were once scorned but have now gained universal acceptance.

ACCREDITATION

CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS FOR MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS: Earn up to 15 CE credits from the American Psychological Association (APA); the American Council for Continuing Medical Education (ACCME), the California Board of Behavioral Sciences (CBBS), and the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), through a joint sponsorship of the Washington School of Psychiatry (WSP) and the Rohr Jewish Learning Institute (JLI).

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COURSE OVERVIEW

LESSON ONE

Parents, Not "Peer Ants"

Properly parented or not, with the passage of years children grow up and become adults. What role do parents play in this process? What real difference does effective parenting make?

In today's Hollywood-influenced society, many children relate to parents as they would to their peers. How has this impacted our children's ability to respect and find a role model in their parents—one worthy of emulating? How do parents instill within their children a healthy respect for authority? How do they get them to look up to them so they play an influential role in their lives? And how do they do this without compromising the child's sense of emotional security that comes from feeling unconditionally loved and accepted?

LESSON TWO

Proactive Parenting vs. Role Modeling

Parenting can be a catch-22 situation. If a parent is too accepting and forgiving, they fail to provide the guidance and direction children need from their parents. If a parent is a strict authoritarian, they risk pushing their children too hard and can damage their relationship with them.

What are the specific goals of parenting? Where should parents set the bar for expectations and rules? And how can they encourage children to do things that are outside of their comfort zone?

This lesson looks at the pros and cons of a variety of parenting models, including role modeling, wherein the type of person the parent is and how they act (even when they are not parenting) can be an important key to success.

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LESSON THREE

Freedom with Responsibility

While parents encourage children to think independently and make their own choices, there are times when children need to be receptive of parental authority. For inexperienced, young decision makers, too many freedoms can lead to irresponsible behavior and the development of narcissistic tendencies. How is a parent to know where to draw the line?

This lesson will explore the Jewish parenting model that evolves as the child ages, providing clear parental guidance and direction for younger children, while gradually incorporating more freedoms as children mature and are able to assimilate the values they were taught. It also discusses how parents can be attuned to the development and unique needs of each child, to know when to graduate to the next stage effectively.

LESSON FOUR

Cultivating Healthy Self-Esteem

According to Dr. Dan Olweus of Norway—a pioneering expert on the subject of bullying and victimization—children who suffer from insecurity and low self-esteem are at greatest risk of being bullied at school. What is the most productive way to build a child's self-esteem? How can parents teach children the rules of life without stifling their creativity? And how do they help their children recognize and develop their unique talents and abilities? This lesson introduces a variety of proven techniques for parents to guide children toward developing a healthy self-concept.

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LESSON FIVE

Using the Carrot and the Stick

Praise and reprimand are powerful tools. One well-placed compliment reinforces a child's self-concept, giving them the confidence they need to succeed and one ill-placed rebuke can be devastating. However, on the flip-side, complimenting a child's natural talent—something outside of their influence, as opposed to their effort—can be detrimental to their self-esteem, and a rebuke that comes from a place of care and concern can make a child feel secure, loved, and cherished.

What is the correct way to discipline? How can a parent know when to use the carrot and when to use the stick? And how do they go about it in a manner that is most conducive to ensuring the healthy development of their children?

LESSON SIX

Jewish Parenting

Parenting is based on long-term goals. It is less about what the child feels like in the moment; rather it focuses on preparing them for life and to meet the challenges they will inevitably encounter. The same is true about instilling a strong Jewish identity and Jewish values. This lesson explores the role of Jewish parents in linking the chain of Jewish continuity. It discusses ways to ensure that children, in addition to being moral upstanding citizens, will be proud and practicing Jews.