



FINDING THE *Joy*

IS IT TIME TO
BRING IN THE
CLOWNS?

TEMMI HADAR

I was once teaching a little girl about the *mitzvah* of honoring your parents. As part of the activity, she had to draw a picture of herself doing something to honor her parents. Her drawing was of herself standing on stage holding an award. I thought maybe she had misunderstood. *Nope*, she tells me, *all my parents want is for me to be a famous actress. This is me winning an Oscar.* At the time she was an aspiring child actress, running to auditions and waiting for callbacks.

I remember this as I sit here, looking at the vast array of options for my children's after-school activities. Swimming, ballet, acrobatics, art, boxing, Taekwondo, drama, music, kindermusic, tumbling tigers, soccer stars, and the list goes on.

My kids beg me to sign them up to whatever their friends go to. Talking to my own friends, we swap tales of afternoons spent in the car shuttling our kids from one activity to another.

Have we all collectively lost our minds?

Can we all just please stop?

All the latest research is suggesting that the number one thing our kids need to succeed in life is...

To be bored.

(I'm paraphrasing slightly, but what the research is really suggesting is that our kids need to play. Not on an iPad, or

in structured group activities, but independently, with other kids, or even by themselves where they need to actively engage their imaginations to entertain themselves.)

I can hear the arguments in my head already. (I'm already arguing with myself here.)

Let's say my kid has the potential to be the next Van Gogh or Tiger Woods?

What about their weak core?

They really love it!

They complain so much when they have nothing to do.

I don't want to deprive them.

Might I remind you that I highly doubt Van Gogh got his start by his mother shuttling him to art lessons as a child, and a quick Google search just alerted me to the fact that he actually showed no artistic inclination as a child. And do we really want our children to be the next Tiger Woods?

You know what else is good for low muscle tone? Washing floors and folding laundry and other household chores.

If I ever complained that I was bored as a child, my mother would look at me and say, "Do you want me to bring in the clowns?"

I don't know if it's only in my part of the world that this has gotten out of control, but I suspect not.

We all need to calm down and put our kids outside with a bike and a friend. Let them fight over it. It will teach

them good negotiation skills. Very handy for almost any future career.

Meanwhile, I'm gonna tell my kids the latest craze in extramurals is called boredom. And I want them to excel. Go wild, kids. My kids have a defiant streak so I can only hope that if I encourage them to be bored, they will immediately proclaim themselves the least bored people in the world.

Our children are extraordinary, but not because they excel in any specific arena. Let's not make them think that.

They are extraordinary because they are these little human beings who are thoughtful and interesting and full of wonder; they are people who have the ability to empathize and create imaginary worlds and make shows (that we as parents are forced to watch and they just never, ever end—but I digress). Let's allow them to develop that.

Let's all collectively end this madness of scheduling our children to the max while running ourselves and them ragged. Let's let them be bored.

Meanwhile, I think I am signing myself up for art class. I might be the next Van Gogh. I had zero artistic inclination as a child.

Temmi Hadar, born and raised on shlichus in Seattle, is now living about a million miles away in Johannesburg, South Africa. In "Finding the Joy," she ponders the meaning of life while perpetually sleep-deprived and attempting to juggle the roles of mother, wife, shlucha, teacher, writer and human being.

Commuting to or from **work**?
On your **lunch** break?
Enjoying a quiet **evening**?

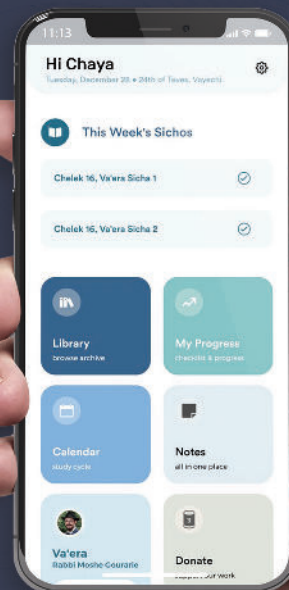
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