



GOLDIE GROSSBAUM

THE DAY I GOT AN **F** IN PARENTING

LAST THURSDAY I GOT AN **F** IN PARENTING.

Completely and royally failed.

At least that's how I interpreted the text message I received.

"Your boys are being extremely disrespectful; we need to talk about this."

Oh.

Another adult was telling me that my boys were disrespectful. I got an F. I failed dismally.

My energetic and sometimes rowdy boys, ages eight, ten, and 12, were being supervised and tested by their teacher who oversees our homeschooling program and apparently it wasn't going well.

They were outdoors in 90-degree weather, at 3 p.m., taking tests on laptops, and as three brothers do, they feed off each other when it comes to all things—good behavior or otherwise.

And here it seemed to be the otherwise.

Is she blaming me?

So what does a mom do when another mom tells her that her kids are being extremely disrespectful and not cooperating?

Like is she really trying to say, you bad mother, you taught your kids to be rude to adults!

Does anyone think that mothers actually want their kids to act that way?

Do I apologize? Apologize for what?

One thing was certain, this adult was extremely frustrated, and as the mom, well I guess it was my fault.

Hence the F.

But here's what I've discovered.

Parenting is not a gumball machine.

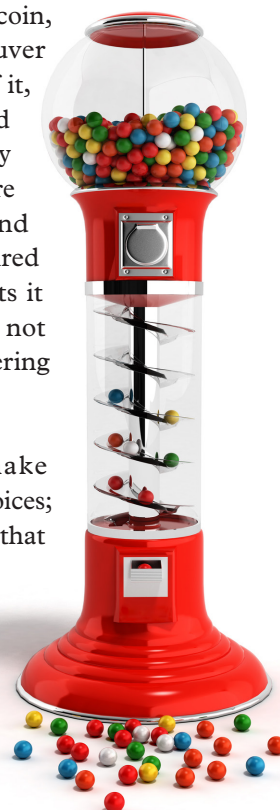
Gumball machines are straightforward; put in a coin, get a gumball. Every time. You put in what's expected of you and you get what you expect of it.

I'd say parenting is more like the claw machine—the machine at every arcade place that taunts you and you convince yourself that you are going to beat it. And as it eats up coin after coin, you carefully and steadily maneuver that claw arm, never losing track of it, hyper focused on its every move and slowly lower it, carefully and delicately aimed at just the item you want. You're sweating from the intense labor and you watch it slowly reach your desired prize; it slowly grasps a corner, lifts it a fraction of an inch as you watch not breathing, and then drops it, delivering nothing to you.

That's parenting.

You sweat, you toil, you make intentional decisions and mindful choices; you give it all you got, you give all that you know how to give... and most likely what you get in return is not what you envisioned.

But it's different than the claw machine, where you walk



away with nothing; in parenting you don't walk away empty-handed.

You always get something beautiful and priceless, if you stop trying to limit the options.

So my kids were disrespectful. So much so that the adult came complaining, which in my perception was blaming, and vented her frustration to me.

So do I say I'm sorry I've raised such rude children?

Do I say I'm sorry I told my kids to be disrespectful?

I chose something more neutral: "I'm sorry you had to deal with that. I will speak to them about it."

Am I proud of them?

At that moment, I sure wasn't.

Should I punish them? Consequences? Penalties? How dare my children behave like that to another adult!

So do I get an F? Is it that easy to fail?

Parenting isn't a gumball machine but really it's a lot better than a claw machine.

It's the ultimate test of self, of patience to allow

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our children to grow and mature at their own pace, through their stages and phases and ups and downs. Of being a guiding light and good example of what's right and wrong. Of catching them when they fall but not shunning them when they fail. Of allowing each child to grow into their best self, not necessarily your version of best. Of loving each child even when another adult is annoyed.

So, my fellow Annoyed Adult, I'm annoyed too. And to be honest, I'm sure it'll happen again. And I'll watch them grow into their own little people. But my kids are not gumballs and my kids are not my report card. There's no such thing as an F in parenting.

Parenting is not about helping your kids be the best version of your dreams. It's about helping them become the best version of themselves, so they can serve Hashem in their best way. And the path is a bumpy one.

The only time you get an F is when you expect it to work like a gumball machine. ❄️



Goldie and her husband Rabbi Yossi Grossbaum direct Chabad of Folsom & El Dorado Hills in Northern California, with the able help of their 11 children ka"ah. Goldie blogs about being the mom of nine boys and two girls, ranging from newborn to teens, and finding the humor in the ups and downs, leaps and lurches of raising kids. Read more of Goldie's writings at www.littleyellownotepad.com.

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