



Have You Failed Parenting?

Goldie Grossbaum

Last month marked ten years that I'm in the parenting business. Unlike any other professions where at the ten-year mark you've mastered the skills and are ready for a promotion and a raise, the rules of the parenting business are different. Can't say the skills are mastered... or that there's any raise coming... or a promotion from changing diapers... but I can say that I've finally discovered just what skills parenting requires!

Everyone has read a parenting book or two, gone to a workshop. Ever wondered what exactly we are trying to master, and what *is* the key to successful parenting?

To be a perfect parent? I'm sure we all have a different definition of perfect.

Perfect parent = clean house?

Perfect mom = three-inch heels?

Perfect mom = immaculately dressed?

Perfect mom = cookies and milk waiting at the table just as the school bus pulls up or to only buy organic free range eggs at \$6 a dozen and non-GMO-gluten-free biscuits?

It only took about four days into motherhood to realize I had to make adjustments to what I assumed was perfect parenting.

Is it raising perfect kids?

Kids who get straight A's, eat with a fork and knife and always wear their socks?

Kids whose PJ shirt and pants match?

Kids who keep their toothbrushes properly stowed and never dunk them where toothbrushes should never go?

Kids who only use the amount of toilet

paper needed and never just pull a whole roll for fun?

By the time my oldest turned two, my perfect child list was quickly shrinking.

Either I would fail the parenting test or I had to redefine parenting.

And so I opted for redefining.

And after many years of trial and error, I figured out the definition of parenting. No, I have not mastered it, but at least I now know what I need to master.

Parenting is not about perfecting my kids.

Parenting is not about perfecting my house.

Parenting is not about perfecting my husband.

Parenting is not about perfecting myself.

It is about working *on myself*. Working on myself to accept that I am not perfect.

Accepting my kids for who they are.

Accepting my mess for what it is.

Accepting and respecting my husband for who he is.

Accepting myself for who I am.

Becoming more patient.

Becoming more flexible.

Becoming more persistent.

Becoming more consistent.

Letting go of my misconceptions of perfect parents.

Letting go of my misconceptions of perfect kids.

Letting go of my misconceptions of perfect housekeeping.

Embracing my shortcomings.

Embracing my kids' shortcomings.

I haven't failed parenting because my kids sometimes talk back.

I haven't failed parenting because they sometimes dump their laundry on the floor.

I haven't failed parenting because they sometimes break each others' Lego creations.

My kids are not perfect. They will never be perfect. My house won't be perfect and neither will I.

And parenting is the ability to accept that, embrace it and work on becoming more understanding. Letting go of things that don't work as planned. Letting my kids be who they want to be, and not projecting on them what I want them to be. Letting them choose their own interests, not necessarily the same as mine. Their own talents, not necessarily the same as mine.

Accepting them as their own little people.

Parenting is not about being perfect.

On the contrary, it's about being imperfect. And loving every minute of it.

Goldie Grossbaum and her husband, Rabbi Yossi, direct Chabad of Folsom, California, with the help of their children. To read more of Goldie's musings, visit littleyellownotepad.com.

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