

□ I WISH MY CHILD CAME WITH INSTRUCTIONS □

by Rabbi Chaim Morgenstern

At my child raising lectures parents often ask me advice about a difficulty they are encountering with one of their children. Sometimes, the guidance that I offer solves their problem. However, many times, even when I give them a few different suggestions, they reply that they've tried all of them without success.

It's quite obvious, that existing problems in family relationships cannot be solved in a question and answer session (or over the telephone). At times, the guidance and strategies contained in these articles can help parents with their child raising problems, or at least prevent the situation from further deteriorating. However, parents should not feel discouraged or disappointed if, after applying the principles contained in these articles, are still unsuccessful in solving their problems. Unlike physical ailments that can be treated with a regimen of medication, there are no universal formulas to solve child-raising difficulties.

Child raising problems can be compared to a heart condition that is easy to treat when diagnosed in its early stages but will require major surgery if neglected. Similarly, these problems do not usually solve themselves and, if neglected, can necessitate professional guidance.

However, by implementing the guidelines and strategies contained in these articles in the early stages of a child's life, parents can prevent child- raising problems from developing as illustrated by the following anecdote: In the middle of a busy thoroughfare in Chelm, there was a large pit that caused injury to the townspeople, who were constantly falling into it. Although a small fence was erected around the pit to block entry to it, the people ignored it and were still stumbling into the hole. One of the town's wise men came up with a brilliant idea: "Let's build a hospital next to the pit to provide instant treatment for anyone who falls into it." Upon hearing this, someone in the town exclaimed, "Fools! Why don't you simply fill up the hole?"

During my Yeshiva years in *Mesivta Rabbeinu* Chaim Berlin, I was fortunate to hear *vaadim* from Rav Avigdor Miller. These *vaadim* were short talks focusing on different areas of *midos* improvement. After the *vaad*, we would be given 2-3 weeks to work on that particular *mida* before proceeding onto the next one.

I think that this same method would be ideal for parents. Parents should choose a section on a specific topic and work together to apply and implement the principles or techniques. (At times they may need guidance and assistance from someone experienced in child-raising problems in helping

them implement the techniques.)

Only after parents have somewhat succeeded in a particular area, should they proceed further.

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