



# NESTO

Being a teenager is not always fun even in the best of times. Your parents do not understand you. Your teachers do not understand you. Even your friends do not seem to understand you. And to top it all off, your parents announce that they are uprooting you from your home, detaching you from all your friends and generally destroying your life by taking you with them on Aliyah to Israel.

The above description is a bit exaggerated. However, many teenagers especially from English-speaking countries who make Aliyah are at-risk from both a psychological and spiritual perspective. They display various signs of anomie and many resent the fact that their parents made them come to Israel. Some have strongly resisted any attempts to integrate them with the native Israeli youth. They are very independent-minded seeking an escape from parents and teachers and (mostly unknowingly) searching for meaning and a social framework where they can express themselves freely. Moreover, their confused identity often impinges negatively on the maintenance of traditional norms and religious behaviors, which expresses itself in rebellion to parents and authority figures.

NESTO offers these teenagers an alternative, warm environment where they can rediscover themselves, cope

with their problems, come to terms with their families, and generally adapt to Israeli society.

NESTO programs include weekly extra-curricular activities: Chugim (creative self expression), leadership training, communication skills, discussion groups, holiday activities, Tiyulim, social action projects, and recreational activities; occasional Shabbatonim in which the participants explore their personal ideologies regarding such issues as Aliyah, faith, and relationships; counseling opportunities; and parent-child bridging activities.

Indeed, since its inception NESTO has helped in a significant way to ease the absorption process of its participants. The co-ed, upbeat and pleasant framework has had a significant, positive impact upon the hundreds of English-speaking teenagers, who in the past few years made Aliyah. They feel better about themselves and find it easier to become part of Israeli society. Through NESTO's efforts, these young people are being absorbed into their schools and peer groups with greater success. Relationships with parents and families have improved, as the family unit better understands the needs of the NESTO member and vice versa. Increasing numbers of NESTO graduates are serving in the IDF, in Sherut Le'umi (national service), and attending Yeshivot Hesder.

