

May is Mental Health
Awareness Month
For Your Wellbeing



Shabbos Table Talks | Week Two: Feelings for Families

Introduction

Welcome to **Shabbos Table Talks - Mental Health Edition!** Let's focus on some of the ideas that create the foundation for your family's mental health. Get ready for an interactive discussion with your family! We've set up a step-by-step guide to make it easy to talk to your family about mental health. Stay tuned each week throughout May for another Shabbos Table Talks to help build this healthy foundation.

Activity

Step 1 - Lets collect some points!

- At the Shabbos table, ask your family to list examples of feelings. Each person should give one answer before going around the table again.
- Award 1 point to each family member who provides an answer such as happy, sad, excited, nervous, depressed, frustrated, joyful and secure. Award 2 points to any family who mentions empathy or sympathy in their answer.

If your family has five or more points, you're already rooted in emotional health and awareness. A family with less than five points can be tested again after this discussion is over!

Step 2 - Let's Learn some Fundamental Ideas!

• Ideas:

- A **feeling** is something inside of you that tells you what is going on in your head and heart. Feelings are natural and they are not "bad" or "good". But sometimes, they can feel "bad" or "good", or they can feel comfortable or uncomfortable.
- Sometimes, when our family or friends have a feeling, we also feel that feeling - almost like looking in a mirror! There is an emotion called **sympathy**, which is when you have your own feelings because your family or friend is either happy or sad. There is another emotion called **empathy**, which is when you try to feel the same feelings as your family or friend - trying to imagine yourself "in their shoes".
- **Our feelings and our behaviors:** What we think and feel affects our behavior. People don't know what you are feeling unless you tell them. So sometimes, they guess your feelings by looking at how you talk or how you behave. If you are feeling happy, you might smile, laugh, or act very nicely. If you are feeling angry, you might frown or yell. It can be really hard to behave the right way when your feelings don't feel good.

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• Examples:

- If you get a poor grade on a test, how do you feel? You might feel upset if you studied hard, and you might cry or want to tell your parents about your test.
- Someone cuts in front of you when you are in a line. You might feel annoyed or angry, and you might tell the person that he or she has done something wrong.
- Ask your family: "What other examples can you share? How would that thought make you feel?"

Step 3 - Let's Learn from Each Other

1. (For children of all ages)

1. Can you give an example of when your feelings were hard for you? [If your child needs some hints: being left out of an activity, doing poorly on a test, being nervous before that test.]
2. Can you give an example of when your feelings were positive? [If your child needs some hints: winning a contest, being served your favorite supper, getting a compliment.]

2. (For middle school aged children)

1. When you feel a difficult feeling, what makes you feel better? [If your child needs hints: talking about it, writing about it, drawing, playing sports.]
2. Give an example of when you felt empathy - where you feel the same feelings as your friend.

3. (For high school aged children)

1. Give an example of a time when you felt a strong feeling and then thought before you responded.
2. How do you cope with your feelings now that you are getting older?

Conclusion

As we go through this week, let's remember to pay attention to our feelings and how our feelings affect our behaviors. **DID YOU KNOW?** In truth our behaviors can also affect our feelings! [Mesilas Yesharim, Chapter 7]. Next week, let's share some examples where you understood your feelings, and chose to behave in a positive way over the course of the week. Don't forget, talking about your feelings with your family and other trusted adults is always helpful, just as we are doing right now.