

Torah Attitudes That Will Boost Your Children's Confidence and Emotional Security

Statements and ideas repeated by a parent over and over again have a good chance of remaining permanently with a child and influencing his future.

The following are 8 *Torah* attitudes that, if internalized properly at a young age, can go a long way to help our children develop into emotionally healthy adults.

1. Inspire your children to celebrate¹ their individuality² by informing them that every single person³ that was ever created possesses a unique combination of strengths, talents⁴, and qualities⁵ that are not shared by anyone else in the entire world⁶. Since the beginning of time there never was a person like them and there never will be one until the end of time⁷.
2. Reiterate to your children that a person should conduct himself by what he knows to be right⁸ and not by what his friends approve or disapprove of⁹.
3. Impress upon your children that *Hashem* values effort over results¹⁰. Someone who put in maximum effort into an endeavor is respected and cherished by *Hashem* more than one who extended less effort even though his results were better¹¹. Disclose¹² to your children that in real life, the qualities of hard work,

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1. In a world where there is such a stress on conformity and the "herd" mentality is so prevalent, it is extremely important for parents, who really know their children best, to help them develop their inherent individuality. A person who is not in touch with his individuality will ultimately suffer as a result.
 2. Although individuality is a desirable value, conformity also has great benefit too. Therefore, parents must maintain a delicate balance between these two attitudes. This dichotomy or duality can be compared to the game of chess that is governed by extremely strict rules, yet there are endless ways to play the game within that rigid framework. Parents must constantly make the judgment call deciding when conformity is indeed the right path to follow or the reverse.
 3. At times it is important to stress to children that every family unit has their own unique and special identity.
 4. On a practical level, children should be encouraged to develop a productive hobby for themselves outside the school framework where their individuality can find expression.
 5. See the *Vilna Gaon (Mishlei 16:4)* who says that every person has a unique path in *avodas Hashem*. The reason for this is that every person has a special mission that he was sent to this world for and only he with his unique personality can fulfill it (see *Sfas Emes on Parshas Shelach*).
 6. A child who is secure in his individuality will be less prone to the negative trend of constantly striving to copy other kids in every area of endeavor.
 7. These are the words of Rav Volbe Z"l in *Alei Shur (vol. 2 p.414)* based on *Chazal in Berachos (58a)* and *Sanhedren (38a)*.
 8. From his parents and teachers. The strong desire for approval and respect of others is the root cause why a person will act contrary to what he knows to be right. There is a powerful letter from Rav Hutner Z"l (*Igros Pachad Yitzhok siman 271*) where he describes the fallacy of being dependent on other people for one's self respect and positive image.
 9. In school, where at times children make trouble in groups, it can be a big challenge for a child to refrain from joining the crowd, therefore he will benefit immensely from constant encouragement from his parents in this regard.
 10. In the educational system students are rated primarily for their academic performance not for the measure of their efforts (part of the reason for this is because teachers cannot always adequately gauge effort levels). Therefore, it is the responsibility of parents to drive home to their children this important truth that effort and perseverance are to be prized, not skill and talent. A time to demonstrate this to children is when they bring home good tests results. One should only compliment them if they confirm that they indeed put in effort. If they admit that it did not require much effort on their part, praise should be withheld. The reverse is true too, if a child put in tremendous effort, parents should praise him even if his grades were poor. Children must always sense that their esteem in their parent's eyes is dependent on the level of effort they invested not on the results.
 11. These are the words of the *Steipler Z"l* in his work *Chayei Olam (perek 12)* based on *Pesachim (50a)* and *Sefer Chasidim (siman 11,064)*.
 12. This is a great source of *chizuk* to a less talented child who is convinced he will never succeed in life.

trustworthiness, and perseverance are far more crucial to success than mere talent or skill¹³.

4. Teach your children that they don't have to be perfect¹⁴! Make them realize that imperfection is inherent to the human condition¹⁵. No one in the entire world is perfect and it is ultimately an unachievable goal¹⁶.
5. Inform and accustom your children that it is OK to admit mistakes¹⁷. Great people throughout history have made mistakes and admitted them¹⁸. Furthermore, one can only learn from his mistakes if he acknowledges them¹⁹.
6. Help children early on to learn and internalize that life doesn't always go according to one's plan²⁰. In addition, advise them to accept that not every problem has a solution²¹. Explain to them that *olam hazeh* is not perfect²².
7. Impress upon them that we can't control many circumstances and events²³, but we can control the manner in which we react to them²⁴.
8. Reveal to children early on that inner happiness and contentment²⁵ is not dependent on possessions or circumstances and events²⁶.



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13. See *Orchos Yosher* (p. 90) where Rav Chaim Kanievsky *Shlita* says that it is a known fact in the *yeshivos* that in the long run it is not the students that were blessed with *kishron* (high IQ) who are successful, but rather the *masmidim* (those who learn with great effort and diligence). See also *Meiri* (*Mishlei* 13:11) on this very point. This is true in many other areas of endeavor too.
 14. As *Chazal* say (*Kidushin* 54a) "Lo nitna torah lmaalchei hashares". Excellence might be a desirable goal, but perfection is not.
 15. Only *Hashem* is perfect in every which way.
 16. Not only is it an unachievable goal, perfectionism can become a hindrance too, because people who are obsessed with perfection will at times actually refrain from important positive activity out of the fear that their performance might not be perfect.
 17. The *Rambam Z"L* writes "It is impossible for a being of flesh and blood not to make a mistake".
 18. *Moshe Rabeinu*, *Dovid Hamelech*, and many others.
 19. The ingrained pride of people makes it very hard to admit a mistake. People will come up with all types of creative rationalizations just to avoid admitting any error. A person must actively train himself to openly admit error. There are untold lifetime benefits in the realms of both *bein adam l'chavireo* and *bein adam l'makom* that come from such training.
 20. Children who are not trained early on to accept when things do not go their way will have great difficulty in overcoming life's various challenges in the years ahead. *Chovos Halevovos* (*Shaar Habechina*) says that it is for this reason children are sick more often than adults, as *Hashem* wants to strengthen their aptitude to deal with adversity and the vicissitudes of adult life.
 21. Accepting this is actually an exercise in *emunah*, for it drives home to a person the point that we don't control everything, allowing the person to let go and be led by *Hashem*. It is a fascinating fact that often people with the greatest disabilities are the happiest and most content. The reason for this is that these people don't need to be reminded that they are not in control, they are aware of it every minute of their lives. Someone who relinquishes control of their destiny to *Hashem* will automatically be a happy and satisfied person, see *Chazon Ish Z"L* (*Maaseh Ish* vol. 6 p. 93).
 22. A deep knowledge of this will prevent much future disappointment and will impact a person to devote the bulk of his attention and energy around activities that will bring him *olam habah* where perfection does exist; see *Mesilas Yesharim* (*Perek* 1).
 23. The realm of pure free will by which *Hashem* judges us, is to be found in how a person relates and reacts to events in his mind and thought process, because the events themselves are orchestrated by *Hashem*; see *Chovos Halevovos* (*Shaar Habitachon perek 4, chelek 4, and Shaar Avodas Elokim, perek 8*), see also *Lev Avigdor* (p. 174) at length on this important topic.
 24. We are therefore responsible for our reactions to circumstances even though we bear no responsibility for the circumstances themselves.
 25. As *Chazal* say (*Avos, perek 4*) "Who is happy? He that is satisfied with his lot". See *Rashi* (*Chayei Sarah* 23:1) who asserts that every moment of *Sarah Imeinu's* life was great, and we know her entire life was fraught with trials and tribulations. (There is a popular saying that Rav Pam Z"L would often quote: "The city of happiness is in the state of mind".)
 26. On the contrary, he who has more desires even more (as *Chazal* say: "yesh lo manah rotseh masayim"), therefore a wealthy person's lack is greater than someone who doesn't have much to begin with. Numerous studies have shown that the very wealthy are by far not the happiest demographic in society.

