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## Skills Not Being Taught Our Children

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Perhaps it is time for us to look carefully at the education that young people receive in yeshivas today, and see if modifications should be implemented. The primary goal of our yeshiva high schools should be to instill into its students a love for Torah study and Halachic practice and equip them with the skills to pursue these throughout their lives. In addition, most parents want their children to have a decent secular education that will equip them to function in modern society so that they earn a livelihood in a profession or vocation of their choice.

There is another body of knowledge which is important for our young people to have and which is often completely missing from the yeshiva high school curriculum. Some of this knowledge used to be taught in the home, but due to changes in our life styles this often does not happen now. Since many yeshiva high school students have completed almost the entire required secular curriculum by the end of the eleventh grade, some or all of the topics below could easily be given in the last year of high school.

Many of the topics listed below are things that people learn as they go through life, often by trial and error. It seems to me that it makes more sense to teach them "up front," so that young people do not have to go through the difficulties often associated with trial and error learning.

### **Life Survival Skills**

- *Map Reading*: It is surprising how many people cannot read a road map and use it to estimate the mileage between point A and point B.
- *Electrical and plumbing repair*: Shouldn't everyone, boys and girls, know how to change a light switch or replace an electrical outlet or rewire a simple lamp? Isn't the same true for replacing the washer in a faucet and other basic plumbing?
- *Cooking*: In most observant homes today both spouses work. While the wife may work only part time when there are young children, the fact remains that when

both parents work a division of household tasks is often necessary. Thus everyone should know the basics of cooking, **boys** and girls.

- *Basic Accounting:* Every person should know how to balance a check book and fill out a simple income tax return, say a Schedule A. They should be familiar with how credit ratings are determined, how to read a statement from the gas and electric company, and how to read a credit card statement.
- *Sewing:* Shouldn't everyone know how to sew a button on a shirt or blouse? Won't the ability to do this really come in handy when a young person is away from family studying? More advanced sewing techniques as well as knitting and crocheting are things that girls may very well want to know once they have a family. Why not teach these skills in high school?
- *Nutrition:* We constantly read articles about the importance of eating a good, balanced diet. Shouldn't young people be familiar with what constitutes such a diet? Shouldn't they know the basics of good nutrition? And what about the importance of vitamins and minerals to their well-being and the well-being of the family that they will one day have?
- *Childcare:* Many Bais Yaakov graduates are married within a year or two of graduation from high school. While most boys marry when they are a few years older, the fact remains that to many proud first-time parents the responsibility of taking care of a newborn is daunting. Grandparents often step in to help and give guidance. However, why shouldn't our young people be prepared for childcare **before** their first child is born?
- *Child Development:* We want our young people to marry, have children and raise a Torah observant family whose members become an asset to Klal Yisroel. This is best done by parents who are knowledgeable about how a child develops, what is appropriate to expect from a child at a given age, etc.
- *Child Discipline:* One of the greatest challenges facing parents is how to discipline their children so that they grow up to become responsible members of the Torah community. Shouldn't young people have some knowledge of this before they marry and have children? Shouldn't they be made familiar with methods and approaches that are consistent with the Torah rather than find it necessary to turn to books on child rearing that often are at odds with Torah Hashkafa?
- *Shopping:* In today's society it is not uncommon for a man to do the food shopping or a woman to have to make a decision about what brand and model of an appliance to purchase. In order to do this in a cost effective manner and to purchase products that fulfill the needs of the family, consumers have to know about comparative shopping. For example they should know how to figure if the three pound size is really cheaper than the one pound size, if the high tech version

of a toaster is really worth the extra money or if the features are simply add-ons that they will never use, etc.

- *Investing*: How many people have invested in something which sounded too good to be true and indeed was too good to be true? While one cannot protect every individual from every scam, experienced investors have an inherent sense of what to avoid. Why not have experts share some of these experiences with high school students?

There is no doubt that the reader can probably add other topics to the above list that he or she thinks should be presented to young people to prepare them so that they are well equipped to handle their future. Others may feel that the list above contains some topics that are best taught either after graduation from high school or within a family framework. They may well be right. However, the point that still remains is that there are many things that our young people should know that they are often not taught formally. Isn't it the obligation of our yeshivas and Bais Yaakovs to make sure that their graduates are indeed properly equipped for situations that they will most likely encounter in the future? And isn't it the obligation of parents to make it clear to these institutions that they should begin to fulfill these obligations as soon as possible? Not to do so would seem to fly in the face of elementary logic.