A Chapter from the Book "Matzmichim Online"

Chapter 6. How to Create a Real and Honest Conversation with Children or a Class about Social Networks

6.1 Like telling a best friend about an embarrassment or something I'm proud of.

The best and most effective educational strategy for parents is to tell the child honestly about my life: Children and teens often feel that "most of humanity" - parents, uncles, brothers, grandparents, teachers and even adults on the street - wants to preach to them at any moment what they have done wrong. That is why many of them, even children with excellent behavior, respond in an attempt to "trick" us whenever they smell preaching. If we are honest with ourselves, most of us do so today as adults to our parents. When a child feels a preaching approach, he tends to raise his defenses, thus blocking his ability to listen, and the chance of a change in his behavior diminishes.

The conversation in which we share with our child our personal lives has several advantages:

- Preparations and tasks may become a more mutual effort.
- The child is attentive, his defenses do not block the discourse, and so he can learn what the correct behavior is.

This is true for every issue in life, but if we focus on the internet and its effects now, it is important to share with the child whenever one of the following happens:

- "Screw ups" and things I'm a bit sorry to have written, transmitted, sent, or done.
- My conflicts or those of my colleagues who had started to pick fights in a group chat ... and it seemed to me that face to face they would not pick fights like that.
- Shame that I would feel if I had not responded to a group chat.
- Network communication that I would feel very proud of myself for how I managed. For example, an email which I received, and held back and did not answer; Protecting a member or their good name of the group if they are absent from the group; Quitting a group that has become too negative for me.
- At least one friend who adds "fuel to the fire" when I'm nervous, and if I listen to him, I might do things I regret. A friend who's cooling me down, whom I can show him what I wrote before I send, or take a break if he tells me I've overreacted.

Another simple technique that helps us as facilitators to avoid educational discourse is to make sure we do not go into a discourse designed for children. Children have the expertise to "smell" and identify when discourse is educational and a little less authentic. It is worth imagining that we are telling things to a close friend of ours instead of a child. Anyone who tests his dialogues with good friends will notice that in conversation with a good friend we are not usually judgmental, and if we express even a little judgment, our response will get a dismissive or angry look. It is worth thinking about who the person is who can tell us difficult things about our behavior, and we will still listen to them openly. We'll ask ourselves, how do they do this?

It is important to emphasize that this is not a proposal to refrain from expressing an opinion. We express our opinion to a good friend when he makes a mistake, or hurts himself. But we do it in a respectful, precise and ranked manner, in the same way we should talk to our children.

When we want to ask questions, it's important to start with open-ended questions. This is because the use of social networks is constantly evolving, and with the speed with which new applications are embedded, sometimes children's creative use of them makes it difficult for us to know what to focus on. Many aspects of our use of them are not only are unknown to us, but we do not even know that we do not know. For example, in the workshops as an open-ended question, we ask: "What are the small things that children do online that bum us out the most?"

6.2 Less snooping creates more open conversations

Forty percent of the children report that they regret something they publicly wrote or shared in the last month (according to research from Israel and the US). This issue can be a good opening for discourse, since this is not the behavior that the parent asks the child to abide to, but in the child's interest as he perceives it.

As a parent, I can talk to the child about things he would do differently today, or share with him the tricks that help me avoid situations where I might act and then regret. All this without investigating the details of a specific case, or even knowing about which case. A dialogue with the children can be opened like this [one should say in a quiet and sensitive tone]:
"Do not tell me anything, I don't want details, but ... do you have a case in your head where you're upset that you wrote or sent something? ... [give a few seconds to think].

"... do not tell me anything, just nod your head if it's a yes ... I'm not asking you about the case, but do you have in mind what would you do a little differently ...?"

In our experience as facilitators, we can have complete, deep, sometimes sad conversations with children, in which we and sometimes even the class do not know what they are talking about. In order to help parents overcome the burning need to know the details of a child's regret, two things should be kept in mind:

- If the child regrets something, it is likely that I, too, as a parent, would think it would have been better if he had refrained from doing what he now regrets.
- What really matters is not what happened previously, but what tools I will give him now, and how he will deal in the next few days when such or similar events occur.

6.3 Channeling the many hours of children in Israel into a social-emotional learning network

The situation in which children in Israel are surfing the Internet in an extreme amount of hours relative to the world, has to be changed at the national, scholatic and individual levels at our own risk. At the same time, one must strive to channel the hours during which the child is on the net to social-emotional learning. There is research and educational evidence that this can be done. We can channel children's social networking time by inviting them to an intelligent viewing of the interaction and dynamics of their peers when they communicate, for example, in WhatsApp with other children in the group.

By inviting the children to observe the behavior of others, there is another advantage that does not exist when the child himself is involved in the event. A conversation that deals with the case in which the child was involved may raise resistance and defiance. On the other hand, when we ask the child to think or analyze strange behaviors of other children in the network he encounters, without having to share details with us, he may enjoy such a conversation and feel like he "knows everything" because he recognizes such behaviors. At the group level, when children were asked who saw certain

phenomena (of course, without having to share them), they would be happy to show everyone how they look wisely at the class dynamics.

The questions can relate to the behavior that the child has witnessed or even experienced

When asked about situations in which the child was involved, the disadvantage is that the child may feel that they are being snooped and closed to open dialogue. So if we choose to ask about the behaviors that the child experiences, it is important that we focus on situations where the child is the victim rather than the culprit. The advantage of this is that children easily find cases in which they have been hurt, and in some cases they know that parents' cooperation in this way will be sympathetic to them.

Any phenomenon related to online communication that we wish to teach our children about, we will suggest to our children to observe it through the communication between other children.
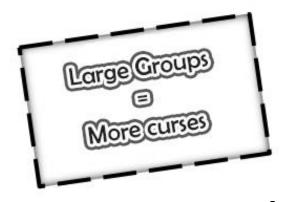
Exacerbating conflicts:

If, for example, we want to teach them that communication through the internet exacerbates conflicts, we can ask:

- "Do not tell me anything, but have you ever seen a fight started in Whattsapp that would not have been started had the culptrits communicated face to face?" If the child replies yes, we can ask accompanying questions. "Think, what did you see there? How does it happen? If you were the counselor of one of the children there, what would you tell him?"

Cruelty:

- The child as a witness: "Do not tell me anything, but did you get to see a friend who says something nasty and think that he would not say that face to face?"
- The child as a victim: "You do not have to tell me if you do not want to, just give me a nod if you think someone once said something nasty to you, and would not, in your opinion, say it face to face with you?"

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- **Large groups produce negative discourse:**
    - "Think about the biggest groups you're a member of, and other groups of four or five children. Did you follow and see what is different about the communication between the groups? In the atmosphere? "
    - The message: The more participants in the discourse, the greater the criticism and the fighting, the more the quarrels and the quality of the discourse are reduced (Dr. Orly Melamed, "Critical Paradox").

o "When does it seem to you that a child is more offended, when they're cursed at within a group of three children or a group of thirty?"

For Teachers - Homework Prepared at Whattsapp: Teachers will be invited to take the questions here and turn them into "homework", where children are given a task to follow, analyze, and even describe online dynamics.

<u>Does it work in reality?</u> We would suggest that, even if this does not pertain to virtual communication, we should use the same principle to channel children's viewing into reality shows. Of course, we are opposed to children watching it, but if we recognize that the children watch such series, we can ask them subversive questions that will make viewing more educated, for example:

- "Who is person who leads to the most growth in others? Who is the one who does the opposite/rots? "
- "How do the characters respond to each other's behavior? Why do the other participants allow the "rotter" to behave like that? "
- Even for Youtubers, who nowadays are becoming cultural heroes, Adi Dror asks the children, "Do you know that while YouTube can be funny, it can also good, and not at the expense of others? Is there a YouTuber that makes you laugh mostly by humiliating others? Is there a YouTuber that spreads messages of growth through their content? "

Youtuber: A person who uploads and preforms on videos that they produce for the internet platform Youtube. The Youtuber will usually write, film, direct and edit their own content.

Youtubers will usually focus on specific topics, such as fashion, makeup, music, food, sports, gags, vlogs (video blogs), gaming and more.
("Youtuber", wikipedia 2018)

6.4 How to always have a positive end

As a guideline, we will always prefer to conclude in a positive tone, and to strengthen the forces and tools that already exist in the child. We can ask him, or him and his friends when they come for a visit:

- What are the tricks that help me not to do things on the internet after which I might be upset that I did?
- Who is the friend that I listen to and show the content I want to upload before I upload it and possibly regret?
- Who is the friend I should ask if I get into something to tell me?
- How can I (the parent / teacher) or other adult or your good friend help you not to do things that you will regret later?

As a parent or teacher I can of course share the tricks that help me avoid things I might regret, but if I do, it's important that I share only "techniques" that I really use, not just educational suggestions that seem like the right thing to do. The way I tell this to a child is important, and is also done in the same way that I would share my tricks with a close friend.

In the lesson plans in Chapter 11 and in parent-child activities in Chapter 13, all practical methods and relevant questions appear for your convenience.