

Setting the Table: Healthy and Sustainable Cooking for Expectant Jewish Families

Session Two – Food Relationships

Hazon Food Programs

Goals of the Session:

This session will explore how families establish and maintain relationships around the dinner table. Contemporary sociologists and psychologists have researched and explored the idea of socialization, or how we consciously/unconsciously train children to learn their culture. We will discuss the relationships that we hope to have with our children at the table, and how both food relationships from Jewish tradition, and contemporary research can inform our own family practice.

Suggested Timeline – Total 2.5 hrs (180 min)

Arrival/Registration – 5 min

Opening Circle – 10 min

Cooking – 105 min

Eating/Discussion – 30 min

Cleanup/Wrapup – 15 min

Program Outline

Arrival/Registration

Opening Circle - Each participant, in turn, will introduce themselves, and they will briefly explain one way that they were involved at dinnertime as a child. For example: each person needed to clear their own place, they needed to finish all of the food on their plate, they needed to take at least one bite of everything served, etc.

Cooking

Eating/Discussion

Framing: When we eat together and talk as a family we begin to build the relationships that we have together. , we are going to discuss these relationships, and how we can use family meals to foster positive relations among family members.

Jewish tradition also has much to say about the relationships that we build with our families at the dinner table. Passover, our yearly ritual reenactment of the story of the Exodus is rich with familial narratives. The Haggadah could just tell us the story in narrative form, but instead our sages chose to tell the story through metaphor and questions. The Four Children, a particularly famous part of the retelling helps us to understand how to answer our children's questions.

Ellen Satter is a contemporary authority on how relationships are created and affected around the dinner table. Her "Division of Responsibility in Feeding" is a seminal text in the world of health and child nutrition. Satter's stated mission is to revolutionize

feeding and eating. Her unconventional advice? Do what comes naturally. "As long as adults do their jobs with feeding, children do a good job with eating. They intuitively eat the right amount of food to grow well. They naturally push themselves along to learn to like new foods. We did too, at one time. We did, that is, until it was educated out of us by well-meaning adults and misguided, puritanical rules about eating." Satter knows whereof she speaks, given her 40 years' experience helping people of all ages with their eating and with feeding their children.

However, looking at this text for the first time, many of you may be asking yourselves, "why are we talking about this now?" Solid food probably isn't on your radar yet, doctors recommend that babies breastfeed or have formula for the first 4-6 months. However far off it may seem now, this time will arrive faster than you know it. It is important to have clear expectations about our responsibilities from the beginning, so we are going to take a few minutes to study this text in chevruta with our partners. Chevruta is a classic Jewish way of studying text where study partners read aloud and discuss the text with each other in order to understand it better than one might on their own. So take 10 minutes, read it aloud with your partner, and guide your discussion of the text with the questions on the sheet.

Discussion Questions for Ellen Satter

Why does Satter choose to describe these guidelines as "responsibilities"? What does it mean for us to have this responsibility to our children?

Why is important for parents to trust their children to decide how much and whether to eat?

Cleanup/Wrapup

Closing circle – What is one thing that you enjoyed about this evening's session, and/or what is one thing that you are looking forward to doing because of it?