

Distress Tool, Speaker/Listener Tool, Building a We-Statement & Constructing a Compromise

The following two scenarios can be used to practice any of, or all of the above tools:

Elana and Shimmy

Elana: "I'm really upset. My nephew is horrible to my daughter whenever we get together with my husband's sister and her family. Usually this happens on Shabbos. Sometimes they are at my in-laws when we go there, or sometimes my husband, Shimmy, accepts a Shabbos invitation from his sister, even though I've said I don't want to go there. This sister's son targets our daughter, teasing her, and even being physically aggressive. He gets other kids to leave her out of whatever 'the grandchildren' are doing. Sometimes he'll 'include' her, but it's to get her to misbehave: telling her she should ignore something I'm telling her or telling her to do something she doesn't want to do, or shouldn't do. I've told my husband that I don't want to be around his sister's family unless something changes. I don't want to go to his sister at all and I think when my mother-in-law invites us for Shabbos, we should ask who's going to be there before we accept.

Shimmy: "I agree 100% that our daughter has to be protected, but I don't think the behavior is as bad as Elana thinks it is. I think a lot of it is just kids being kids. Yes, my nephew has to stop any physical stuff and the teasing shouldn't be tolerated. But, I also want our daughter to know how to handle some of that. Kids are nasty everywhere. I feel badly confronting my sister, or totally rejecting her invitations. I really don't see how we can stop going to my mother when my sister is there without making a whole scene. Also, my sister needs our support and company. Her husband is battling depression and isn't much company or much of a father figure. This might have something to do with why my nephew is a bit out of hand. I think Elana should be a little more understanding and should think of a different solution. I can't just cut off my family."

Ben and Miri

Ben and Miri have an on-going conflict. They both think that their sons should be going to shul, on time, on Shabbos. The problem is that their boys are not so cooperative. Ben goes early to learn with his chavrusa, waking the boys before he leaves, which gives them plenty of time to get up and to get to shul on time. The problem is that the boys don't always get up at that point. Ben is frustrated with the boys but he's also frustrated with Miri. He feels since he's not home, Miri should keep after the boys to make sure they actually get up and get to shul on time. Miri thinks the whole approach of nagging and pushing the boys to go to shul is off. She feels that letting the boys get there when they get there, but without stress and negativity will help them have a more positive connection to shul, davening and Hashem. Ben feels that there are certain things that they belong expecting of, and stressing to, their children as frum parents, and this is one of them. Miri disagrees. She saw her father let her brothers grow into the responsibility of getting to shul on time, at their pace, and sees, frum, healthy men who are connected to their frumkeit. Ben says her father is just lucky and that a parent belongs being more proactive when it comes to Yiddishkeit.