ELUL STORIES
Sharing our stories, sharing lives, creating community

Elul is the month leading up to Rosh HaShanah. Each day during the month, a different Temple Beth Torah congregant will share an Ethical Will or portion of one in order to help us prepare for this season of self reflection and personal growth.

LETTING GO........
Eileen Der Aris

Dear Parents of Young Children,

As I have said before, I remember being in your position. I remember being in awe while holding my newborn child for the first time. I remember giggling with my husband wondering when the parents were coming to take this newborn child home, as it couldn't possibly be ours! I remember those moments lying in bed waiting for the baby to cry, afraid if I fell asleep she would wake up the second that I did. I remember being afraid that I wasn't doing anything right. What would happen if I made a mistake and I mess my child up forever?? I remember the guilt, the worry and the insecurity. What if I make a wrong decision? What will everyone think? I had to live one day at a time, just to get by. People said to me, "Oh enjoy these times, they go so fast". I wanted to enjoy but it was hard because I was so tired, I just want to sleep through the night! "Oh your child is going to Kindergarten?? That's is so far from now, I can't even think about it. That's for the big kids." Well now here I am, 18 years later. I have a son who is a sophomore in high school and a daughter who is a freshman in college. How did I get here? How did it go so fast? Well, I hate to say it but those people were right.

Throughout the years I began to ask who I was. Am I anyone else but Hannah and Ethan's mother? What will I do when they leave? All I ever wanted to be was a mother. That was when I started to explore for myself who I was and what my purpose was. I have always been all about growth, wanting to learn, wanting to understand and wanting to give back. I wore many hats throughout the years. I'm sure I made many mistakes with my children and others things
in my life. I had to learn that as much I did consider my children a part of me, they really are their own people with their own lives to live with a whole set of their own lessons to learn. They need to need to fail, sometimes. That part is really hard for me, but how else will they learn? My husband and I are there to help them when they need it, just loving them unconditionally. One thing that I did and continue to do, is to make sure that I let my children know that it's OK to feel, however they need to. They are allowed to feel angry and think mean thoughts. They can be happy, sad, envious or frustrated. However, what they need to be is responsible for are their words and actions. I try to be a role model. I also try to be accepting of their views of the world, even when they don't match mine. And I continue to be their biggest cheerleader for whatever they are passionate about.

So, after doing all this work, it comes time for one of them to leave. She doesn't think she wants to. Well, why would she? It's so easy to stay home, where it's always safe. Of course, I want her home too. But I have to remember: she is her own person, not an extension of me. She NEEDS to go away and see how well she can do without me there, cheering her on and encouraging her to take action. We have given all we could for over 18 years, now it's time to take what she has learned and use it to see how well she can fly.

So, dear parents, what can I leave you with? What I have learned is that you need to TRUST your gut when it comes to making decisions. Whatever one person thinks is obviously the "right way" is almost always different for someone else. Know that ANY decision you make is ok because it was what you felt was best at the time. Also, have FAITH. We all get so caught up in our everyday life; we forget to just believe that good things are going to happen. Even if something undesirable happens, believing otherwise won't change the outcome and it feels a whole lot better!! Take the time to smile and reflect on the good times WHILE they are happening. You'll be glad you did. Continue to spend time fostering your own growth because your children will not stay with you forever. They are individuals who need to fly. Find time for what you love to do or learn to discover what your passion is. Remaining an individual (not only someone's parent) while bringing up your children will keep you grounded and teach your children to value themselves. Finally, kiss your partner. They may annoy the heck out of you sometimes, but remember that your love is what brought you together in the first place.

Respectfully yours,
Eileen Der Aris

_Eileen Der Aris is currently a Certified Parent Life Coach. She and her husband, Rich have 2 children, Ethan and Hannah, who has sang in many family services._
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