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kosher for Passover because it's only for eight days, but I can't manage it during the year." I want to ban the word "hypocrite" from any discussion of Jewish living. It's used as an excuse, an obstacle, a "put-down". It can easily be used to justify the elitism of those who are already way down the path, or to mix the analogies, up the mountain. Well, it's about time for those who are on high to come down and meet the people. For God's sake, even Moshe did that!

We would be much better served to encourage people to add one more step to their ritual, to try one new thing at their seder--to understand that, unless you are a true "ba'al/at t'shuvah," adopting a fully Jewish "lifestyle" takes years of practice. Let's enable our people to "move on down the road" one step at a time.

## 9. Be Enthusiastic

We have this "Course Evaluation" form that our students at the University of Judaism fill out at the end of the semester. There are some forty statements about us professors that they get to rank on a scale of 1-5, 5 being best. They are mostly the typical things you find on surveys like this: "knows the subject", "comes prepared to class...". The one I've always liked is: "Enthusiastic about the subject."

If there is one quality that is absolutely fundamental to my approach to teaching it is enthusiasm. I truly love what I do. I truly love Judaism. And I want my students to know it.

So, I approach teaching or lecturing with all the enthusiasm I can muster. I suppose the best indicator of this is how spent I am at the end of a class or a talk. It takes enormous energy to teach for an hour or two or three.

But, it's worth everything. Because enthusiasm is catching. It rubs off. If I'm excited about what I'm teaching, the students often get excited, too. And when they get excited, when they learn what Jewish living can do for them, their kids, their families--the baby steps get bigger, the crawl turns to a jog, and the learning flows.

## 10. Jews Are Made One at a Time

One of the nicest compliments I ever received was from the president of a synagogue, a rather wealthy man who owned a group of car dealerships, after a Friday night Scholar-in-Residence lecture. It had been a particularly responsive crowd and the talk really sizzled. He approached me at the Oneg Shabbat and said: "That was great. Gee, you could make a million. Have you ever thought of being a salesman?" I replied: "I *am* a salesman."

If you think about it, there are a lot of characteristics that salespeople and teachers share: good communication skills, knowledge of product, enthusiasm for the product, marketing ability and knowing when to close.

I'll close with my last point: Jewish education is a retail business. We make Jews one at a time. It takes a lot of work to reach and teach someone to be Jewish. It begins with the personal connection and proceeds from there. And even then, it is only a beginning. Once on the path, it takes a supportive community to keep someone with us.

But, in the end, when a student tells you she took your idea and had the best Seder her family ever had, or he tells you he decided to celebrate Shabbat every week, or she tells you she gathered up enough courage to make the shiva call and it went fine, it feels like more than a million. It is one of the most rewarding feelings any human being can ever have. □

## Lessons to be learned, lessons to be taught

Shulamith Reich Elster

I am a teacher and the way I have chosen to lead my life reflects the lessons I have learned along the way. My principles and beliefs are inherent in the way I view the world.

For me, being an educator--a Jewish educator--is a way of life--a way of approaching and looking at the world through my own lenses. I look at things as they are and as they can be. These same lenses keep my eyes focused on both the present and the future but also remind me of past experience.

The lenses I wear allow me to see things in many perspectives--as a student, as a teacher, and as an educator of educators. Three questions emerge as I peer through my lenses.

What can I learn from what I see?

How can this influence what I do and what I hope to do?

How can I help myself and others to grow, to realize our potential, and come closer to the achievement of our goals?

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These are both wide-angle and high-speed lenses. Though the frames change, the prescription remains the same!

### Reading Books...And People

I wear reading glasses. I love to read, and I read everything in sight. Though my pile of reading materials may seem so very diverse and often disparate, reading widely and critically helps me to learn new things and to discover new ways. As I read, I refract. Reading between the lines is also important. I search for ways in which these new ideas can teach me and others and influence what we do. Though reading is my primary personal and professional development activity, I also read so that I can teach and help others learn. I highlight, clip, turn down and tear out pages, forward tidbits and articles and books to others, and continue to interrupt others as I read passages important to me aloud.

I also read people--I seek to understand their points of view, and look for ways to help them expand their horizons. Along the way, I have come to realize that often the view is enhanced by the company of others. My specialty is in seeing people in ways they cannot yet see themselves. It is what makes my role as a mentor so fulfilling. As a teacher and through the relationships which I develop with my students and with my colleagues, I can help to build "unimagined bridges" into the future.

### Shifting the Perspective

I also wear binoculars. With my binoculars, I can bring what is far away closer. I can continually search for what is new and different, and for what is ahead on the horizon. I can look far and wide as I have learned that there is so very much students can learn from all people, and from their ideas and experiences. I look towards worlds beyond my own, and at the settings where diverse people have met the challenges of transmitting culture from one generation to another.

And, I can turn my binoculars and take what is close and familiar and transport it far away. What is it that I have learned and done here that can be carried away to stimulate and to encourage others. What can I do for you, I ask people. What can I do for them, I ask myself.

### Teachers Are Optimists

People say that my lenses are always rose-colored--that my cup is always half full. I do look for the best in people. I look at things and I want to find what is good. I have faith in students and teachers and schools and

synagogues and camps and in the power and potential of the process called learning. And, I believe that the world is good, and we can as students, and as teachers, work towards its perfection.

I look through all these frames simultaneously. As I see myself, I am the child and the parent, the colleague and the friend, and the student and the teacher. In each of these roles, there are lessons to be learned and lessons to be taught. □

## The gift of being average

Ephraim Buchwald

Me, a "Master Teacher?!" If Rav Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, considered himself a *melamed*, then I hardly deserve to be called a "Master Teacher". I have, however, always considered myself a "fortunate teacher" because *all* my teaching experiences, primary, secondary, tertiary, adult, camping, informal and formal have been exciting, positive and fulfilling. How many Jewish educators can make that claim?

Each day I am moved to acknowledge the special gifts with which I have been blessed. But prodigious intellect was not one of those gifts. In fact, at Lincoln Square Synagogue I am known as the "Beginners' Rabbi", a title which some might find offensive, but which I find quite accurate, indeed flattering. Neither am I trying to be self-effacing or unduly modest by arguing that a good part of my so-called success as a teacher may very well be due to the fact that I'm just "average".

### The Secret of Motivation

Being "average" has its advantages. As a child, I found much of my religious studies boring and irrelevant. But when I was properly motivated and stimulated, my soul would catch fire. To this day I deeply empathize with Jews who are unmotivated. I know very well how they feel, because I was one of them. If I possess a pedagogic gift, it is the ability to simplify and popularize concepts and ideas, and to present those ideas in a non-threatening manner, so that unaffiliated and/or alienated Jews don't get ruffled and run away in the first five minutes of my

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