

Ideas how to enhance the atmosphere at the Shabbos table

Rabbi Yechiel Cohen.

1. Build up the **love for Shabbos** by anticipation through the week. That gift that somebody sent you –keep it for Shabbos etc.
2. Erev Shabbos, spouses can perform even a small act for each other polish shoes, run the bath - *kiruv levovois* - will spill over into atmosphere at table.
3. (Try It !)Take time out for yourself and your spouse to have a short nap before Shabbos. After all, tonight you will be educating, at least by example. (You would not be happy if your children's teachers would be exhausted and irritable).
4. Home is not school. Don't *faher* / test kids at the table. Suggestion; know your child's **strengths**, use the table to **increase** his confidence with those questions you know that he knows the answers to .
5. Bring food on to table only after washing. Then serve first part, **before** any singing or discussion. "Maturity is the ability to delay pleasure". How many adults can resist eating during *droshos* at a simcha!
6. Individual small bottles of drink for each child. *Lecovoid Shabbos* and also has the benefit that each one can ration for him/herself "This is to last you till after the main course".
7. Special toys brought out only for Shabbos.
8. (Take a leaf out of a teachers manual) Watch out for the child coming to the table in a bad mood, try and sort it out **before** the meal.
9. Apparently those with years of experience tell us that there will **always** be one 'angel' who wants time out at this point of the week. Parents can decide between themselves before Shabbos, that come what may his/her behavior is **not** going to disturb their *menucha*, not everything has to be noticed.
10. Special Shabbos treats hidden in serviettes, or given out at other times after zemiros etc. as rewards.
11. Ways of bringing Torah discussion to the table, use age appropriate questions for stimulating discussion. Why does Hashem need a house?
12. Parshas *Trumah* Beis Hamikdash – Beautiful Shuls.

13. Discussion of sensitivities "When we have guests, should we offer to *bentch* them as well?" See Growth through Torah or similar *seforim*.
14. Why do people imagine that the material for the Shabbos table does not need preparation, especially where there is usually a range of ages and mixed ability.
15. My children need a half an hour break to play between each course, or perhaps an enjoyable dance round the table.
16. Use of picture book which can interest even younger children, of *gedolim* or fish, *Tefillin*, *Kashrus*, Egypt, Locust, *Mezuzos*, *Elter Zeide* The Rov, or *Erliche* businessman.
17. Talk about local Gedolim, respect of Rabbonim.
18. Educate to be sensitive to different **types** of guests - couples who have not been blessed with children yet, *Geirim!*, those which are hard of hearing etc.
19. Teach gratitude; 'Close your eyes and try and eat without looking, can you imagine what Yitzchok Ovinu felt like when he was blind ?'
20. Rabbi Kramer *Shlita* asked my four year old "Did Yacov have any girls or only boys,..... who did Dina play with ?"
21. Calm before the meal
22. Many zemiros have each stanza ending in rhyme, children can do the ending, or the chorus etc.
23. There are many zemiros which have a connection to the weekly Parsha, Spot the connection!
24. Somebody asked R' Moshe Aharon Stern *ztl* Kamenitz, about working on *וַיָּבֵר*, he suggested an appropriate time, the 2 hours preceding Shabbos!
25. What points are necessary to take issue with in the behaviour of our children? R'Yaacov Kaminetzky *ztl* " Ask yourself, will my child still be doing this as an adult, if I don't comment on it?"
26. As a lasting gift to your children: two or three traditional Zemiros which you sing every week.

27. If a child has a persistent problem at the Shabbos table, discuss it with him during the week.
28. Give each child attention, if he doesn't get it with you giving it to him the correct way, he will get it some other way.
29. Something particular grinding about one child, it may be a mirror of ones own actions, be מתקן it in yourself and it will disappear, the רבש"ע is sending a message.
30. **Surround yourself on Shabbos - with books about Shabbos!**

**We have a duty to create a meaningful Shabbos meal,
by investing time and energy
in as least as much as our wives devote to the gastronomical side
of the weekly event.**

Rabbi Mordche Miller *Ztl of* - Gateshead, said on an occasion;

“We only want to emulate others
if they are also happy individuals”.

Ultimately, our children
will only want to share in our Shabbos experience,
if they experienced it as a warm and happy occasion.