



See and Hear the Blessings in Your Life

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

This time of the year can be challenging for people because of the holidays. Maybe it is the pressure and sadness brought on because who isn't here this year. I can commiserate. When loved ones are no longer around to celebrate the big things, it is difficult to find the small things to make us smile. I counter with, these are the times, especially when we need to focus on the small, the positive, the beauty that is evident around us if only we would look, listen and hear.

How?

That is a great question. How does one focus on the positive when all around is negative? In my personal experience, it is a choice. It is a choice to find the positive and bring that into your life. Just like it is a choice to focus only on the sadness and negative. Make it a goal to find one thing per week that makes you smile. Increase that goal to one per day when you can. Who is in your life that brings you happiness? What is in your life that brings you joy? The answer isn't the same for everyone. Maybe it is your pet or the daily walk you take. Maybe it is a who - your significant other or a child. And when you focus on that one thing, see it for the blessing that it is. No one has a perfect life. It is how you perceive what you hear, what you see that helps you focus on the good and focus on those blessings.

Where?

Wherever you can. What works for you will not work for me. Your positive will be different from your neighbor or friend or social media audience. But it is important to choose a "where" that does focus on the positive. If you aren't ready to read the posts offering sympathy, don't. If you aren't feeling



the love from a particular individual, step away for now. But remember that the where and the sadness or frustration you feel might be a symptom of your perspective. This doesn't make it any less valid but know that when you are able to emerge from your current situation, look and see if those you shied away from are the culprit or if maybe their well-meaning just needed to be put on hold until you were ready to hear it. Your blessings can be found all around you.

Some Specifics

Again, what will help you focus on the positive, might be different. Your experience is different from mine. However, I want to help open your senses to find those blessings in your life.

Music

So I will start right off and let you know that I was never a big music person - I couldn't tell you who sings what songs or the titles of most. But that doesn't mean that a particular song doesn't automatically change my mood. Maybe it makes me cry. I can be very emotional at times. The songs that do elicit the strong emotions are usually ones that let me have the feelings in a safe space. I can feel the overwhelming emotions focusing on the lyrics or the tempo and they offer a release so that I can see more clearly. Maybe the particular song brings me memories of a time that was better; a time when it was easier to find the good. Billy Joel songs do that for me, often. They bring me back to late high school, early college. A time when I didn't know how good I had it and now wish I had focused a lot more on those blessings.



Nature Walks

For those of you who know me, I love to walk. Sometimes it is just in my neighborhood and I look for the beauty that I see all around me. Maybe it is a family of ducks or a sunrise. Maybe it is an owl that I hear or a hummingbird that is flitting from tree to tree. Early mornings are the best, in my opinion. They are quiet and allow me to focus my thoughts on all that I have to give thanks for in my life. I don't need to drown out the talking or the traffic sounds. I can focus on the soft sounds, the rustling of the leaves. The ducks gliding through the water in the lakes. And while nature might not be your thing, maybe take a page out of my book so to speak, and focus on silence so you can focus on the sounds that bring you joy.

Sounds that are not always appreciated

I am at the stage in my life where, unless I am at work, I don't hear too many babies cooing or making too many cute sounds. I miss this stage. Try to appreciate those sounds that you hear, even when they are late at night, or more often in the wee hours of the morning. They will be few and far between before you know it. But even beyond these sweet sounds, listen to the stories that those at the other end of the age spectrum tell, often over and over. Because these sounds are even more rare. And they will be gone before you know it.

I feel like I am living two lives. The one where I can count my blessings and celebrate the joy with my family for Thanksgiving. The other one has my heart tethered to the hostages that continue to be held, against their will. May we all hear good news and see their safe return.

Happy Thanksgiving and Shabbat Shalom.