

Tips For Giving Criticism

Criticism can be devastating and destroy a relationship - If validation and love are the ultimate tools to bring a student close, and create receptivity, criticism does the exact opposite. When students are criticized, they feel hurt and invalidated. It is human nature to shut down, and distance oneself from someone who can be a source of pain.

As Rabbeim and teachers the negative side effects of criticism leave us in a quandary. We do have to correct behavior and rebuke students, so how do we navigate this without hurting our relationship with our students? Here are a few ideas:

- Don't respond immediately - Students must see your rebuke coming from a place of love and care. If students see your rebuke as a reaction it seems personal and not about them.
- Your words must be gentle and in private - Students will shut down if the rebuke is given harshly - דברים בנחת נשמעים
- The rebuke should be given בדרך רמיזה - Rebuke, even if gentle, and private can still be difficult to receive. Therefore, one should try to rebuke in a way that the student can discover their error on their own.
- Provide the defense for the student to disarm his defenses - Starting by saying I am sure you were unaware of this, can allow the student to not feel attacked. Show them you're giving them the benefit of the doubt.
- Focus on the behavior not the person - The rebuke should not be an attack on the person, rather a correction of the behavior.
- Don't notice everything - Sometimes the best approach is to pretend you didn't notice.
- Get someone else to address the problem - There may be times where asking someone else to address the issue would be better so it does not impact your relationship with them.
- The rebuke should lift the student up and not put them down - The language of the rebuke should be, "You're so great this is beneath you," rather than, "What is wrong with you? How can you do such a thing?" Communicate how great they are, not how great the sin is. Students might rationalize and attempt to reduce the greatness of the sin, however they won't rationalize and reduce the greatness of themselves.