WOW WITH PAM
WORDS OF WISDOM

Joy RX: The Simcha Secret for Living

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

Social media has taken the concept of joy and happiness to a new level. People's individual posts are curated and staged to showcase only the smiles and the laughter. Scrolling through them can leave one feeling a bit of FOMO - fear of missing out. In our fast-paced world, "happiness" often feels fleeting. But Judaism offers a richer, deeper concept: *Simcha* – profound joy. This isn't just a mood; it's a spiritual state, a commandment, and a cornerstone of a meaningful life & a learning journey for everyone.

From the very beginning, Jewish tradition equates the act of learning with joy. The Torah is described as "a tree of life to those who grasp it" (Proverbs 3:18). Think about the infectious energy of a child proudly reciting a new Hebrew letter, or discovering the connection between pushing a button and seeing the clown pop out of the box. This is the spark of learning where the lightbulb clicks on and a sense of accomplishment brings the *simcha.*

Education, whether in a classroom or even around the Shabbat table, is designed to be joyful. Teachers are encouraged to convey the beauty and excitement of all learning activities, *b'simcha* (with joy). When any learning is approached with *simcha*, it becomes a transformative experience. Delving into this week's Torah portion or experiencing a new way to celebrate Chanukah, fosters a love for knowledge with a connection to heritage, and a sense of belonging that extends through

generations, *l'dor v'dor*.

Family is another area of life where we can cultivate *simcha*. *Shabbat*, with its cessation of work and focus on family, is a weekly infusion of joy. The lighting of candles, the singing of *zemirot* (*Shabbat* songs), the sharing of *D'vrei Torah* (words of Torah), and the simple act of eating a festive meal together – these are all vehicles for creating special moments brimming with *simcha*. *Shabbat* can be exchanged for another day of the week that works for you. Make the traditions your own, adding in ways to focus on *simcha.* Share your moments from work that brought you joy or a sense of accomplishment. Everyone should celebrate with you!

Joy emerges through life's challenges. The Talmud teaches, "Just as one blesses for the good, so too must one bless for the bad." It is important to recognize that we find meaning and strength in difficult times, and ultimately a path to *simcha*, by recognizing the hand of HaShem in all aspects of life. It's about resilience, perspective, and an unwavering faith in the ultimate goodness of the world.

For parents and educators, cultivating *simcha* means creating an environment where values are celebrated, questions are encouraged, and traditions are brought to life with warmth and creativity. It means being present, sharing stories, and making every moment of learning and family connection count. It's about laughter, singing, dancing, and finding beauty in the everyday.

In Jewish thought, joy is not merely an emotion; it's a tool for

spiritual growth and a powerful force for unity. When families and communities are infused with *simcha*, they become beacons of light, attracting others and strengthening the bonds that hold us together. By consciously embracing and nurturing *simcha* in our endeavors and family lives, we not only find happiness but we also unlock an enduring joy that sustains us through all of life's seasons, connecting us to our heritage, our community, and to something much larger than ourselves.

Remember that when you are scrolling through social media. Take the time to focus on the *simcha* in your life and be happy for your friends!

#ShabbatShalom