

10 Rosh Hashanah Hacks to Keep Your Kids (or Students) Engaged

By Raizel Druzman

The High Holidays sometimes get us a little (or a lot) nervous and it's easy to forget that it's just as important for kids to be involved. We can help kids feel connected by giving them a little hands-on guidance about why the holidays matter.

It's especially helpful for kids with special needs, who might already feel more out of the loop. An Israeli organization for kids and adults with special needs, Seeach Sod, excels at making sure that each kid feels connected and challenged according to his or her level of ability. All Seeach Sod programs are designed to provide opportunities for people with special needs to participate fully in Jewish life.

With their extensive experience, parents and staff at Seeach Sod gave us some tips to make the high holidays more fun and meaningful for kids.

1) Sweeten Things Up

Make small honey cakes for your neighbors. This is the perfect way to get brownie points and teach your kids about giving. Save one for noshing and another few for your family to enjoy.

Hint: Teach your kids about intentions while you're pouring in the ingredients. Have each kid choose an intention to "pour" into the batter (love, peace, kindness, fun etc.).

2) Spread the Love

Prepare Rosh Hashanah cards with your kids that they can give out to their friends. It will help your kids feel more involved and get them into the holiday spirit. You can find Rosh Hashanah-related designs or cards online for your kids to color in themselves.

Hint: Don't worry if your kids aren't coloring in the lines; it's for their friends, not yours.

3) Make It Count

Count pomegranate seeds to see if there are 613. To make sure no one gets antsy, give each kid a small section to count and add them all up at the end.

Hint: In case you don't find 613 seeds, there is a study that found that 613 is the average number of seeds in pomegranates from different countries.

4) Invent a Siman

Get creative with your kids and make up your own simanim. They can be meaningful or silly, but most importantly get the whole family involved in the new family tradition.

Hint: Ask your kids for ideas during dinner time the week before Rosh Hashanah. This way you can have time to buy or prepare the new simanim.

5) Go Fishing

If your kids (or the adults in the room) aren't going for a taste of the fish head, get



Seeach Sod students learn new holiday songs.

(CREDIT: SEEACH SOD)



Seeach Sod student pours his heart out in prayer.

(CREDIT: SEEACH SOD)



Seeach Sod student gets up-close and personal with a rooster in preparation for Rosh Hashanah.

(CREDIT: SEEACH SOD)

jelly fish candies from the shuk, cut the heads off and hand those out as an alternative.

Hint: Get a discussion going about why we eat a fish head on Rosh Hashanah.

6) Blow It Up

Buy your kids a shofar and let them practice before Rosh Hashanah. It will help build your kids confidence in their abilities and you never know, you might have the next master shofar blower in your house.

Hint: If they need help, look up tutorials and tips online or ask a neighbor who's a pro. Also, buy yourself earplugs.

7) Help Them Introspect

Don't be afraid to get deep with your kids. Speak to them about their strengths and challenges. Guide them to come up with an area they want to improve. Ask them what they think before jumping in with your own suggestions.

Hint: Pay attention to the mood they are in before you sit down to chat. Pick a time when they are calm and relaxed so they are most connected to themselves.

8) Practice What You Preach

To give your kids a deeper sense of the holiday spirit, commit to working on yourself in a specific way. Challenge each of them to come up with something they want to work on as well. Make a chart to keep track of the times they succeed and give them a prize after a designated number of successes.

Hint: For yourself, choose an attribute or behavior that is related to being a parent. Every time you slip up, give yourself a point. After a certain number of points they get a prize or a treat; e.g., if you yell 10 times the kids get a pizza party.

9) Let Them Run the Show

Make a list of all the simanim and let each kid pick the ones they want to be in charge of on Rosh Hashanah night. Their task will be to hand them out and if they are old enough, to provide an explanation.

Hint: Type a list of simanim with pictures to make choosing more fun. You can search for images online or draw in your own.

10) Make a Wish

Make your own fortune cookies with blessings for the New Year. Have your kids write down a few blessings that they want for themselves, other members of the family and their friends.

Hint: It sounds complicated, but fortune cookies are surprisingly simple to make.

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