

To Be or not To Be ... stressed

Yom Tov is here. Ahhh, you say. But wait, is that “Ahhh, (emphasis on the soft ‘h’ sound) I’m so happy” or “Ahhhh, (emphasis on the loud ‘A’ sound) I’m so stressed”? Let’s look at this analytically, through the use of a chart to help us sort this out.

To Be... happy	OR	To Be... stressed
We get together with family=happy		We get together with family=stressed
We eat a lot of good food=happy		We eat a lot of good food=stressed
We get to spend extra time with our children=happy		We get to spend extra time with our children=stressed
We spend more time in Shul=happy		We spend more time in Shul=stressed
We eat in the Sukkah=happy		We eat in the Sukkah=stressed
We buy a Lulav and Esrog=happy		We buy a Lulav and Esrog=stressed
We plan leisure activities=happy		We plan leisure activities=stressed

Notice that the first column looks strikingly similar to the last column. How can that be? Do family, food, and free time make us happy or not? The answer lies in the Sukkah, or at least in the way we build the Sukkah. We all know that to build a Sukkah takes time and materials. We all know that we might need help depending on the size required for our needs and the specific type that we want to build. If we plan properly, and maintain realistic expectations about the project, we can build a beautiful Sukkah that we can enjoy. Our Sukkah, for example, is made out of Coke crates (we have permission from Coca-Cola authorizing us to use them-that’s a whole story in itself). I planned, collected and know how much time it takes for us to build it. If more of us participate, it goes faster and there is more time for more elaborate decorations. Whoever chooses to help out has a good time and whoever chooses not to partake simply misses out on the excitement. By planning right, and maintaining realistic expectations, even though it is all a lot of work, we end up with a durable Sukkah that can give us much pleasure.

We all realize, on some level, that planning is important. That leads to a successful project. The “cherry on the top”, that element that really brings out our happiness, is the realistic expectation. Let’s face it, stress comes from worrying that things won’t work out the way we intended. Rather than being disappointed with the outcome, sometimes the best way to deal with something is to change our expectations of the outcome! For example, if I anticipate that it’s bound to rain at some point over Sukkos, then, I’m not as disappointed when it happens. My Sukkah and the decorations will get wet and we can still enjoy Yom Tov. Let’s look at our chart again, adding this information into our equations, and see how we can get better results.

To Be... happy
<u>We get together with family</u>

<p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means who will sleep in which room, how much time will it take to make the beds</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means that there will be some fighting among the kids and some impatient outbursts on the part of the adults,</p> <p>=happy</p>
<p><u>We eat a lot of good food</u></p> <p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means how much time will it take to go grocery shopping and cook</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means that not everyone will like what is prepared and not everyone will help clean up</p> <p>= happy</p>
<p><u>We get to spend extra time with our children</u></p> <p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means buying an extra game or not staying up late (making that extra fancy dessert) so that we are too tired the next day to play with our kids</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means that our children will want to decide on how they want the time spent, not us</p> <p>=happy</p>
<p>We spend more time in Shul</p> <p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means modifying our menu so that we can stop our food preparation in time to get there, and, plan a menu such that we don't have to run out of Shul too early to heat it</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case mean every meal does not have to be an award winning production</p> <p>= happy</p>
<p><u>We eat in the Sukkah</u></p> <p>+<u>planning</u>, which in this case means getting enough chairs and setting up space for leichters,</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means understanding that food will spill on its way out to the sukkah and critters will come to visit</p> <p>=happy</p>
<p><u>We buy a Lulav and Esrog</u></p> <p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means getting to the stores early enough to have a good selection</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means that we realize that our younger children might want a chinuch set and calculate a realistic amount for our budget</p> <p>= happy</p>
<p><u>We partake of leisure activities</u></p> <p>+ <u>planning</u>, which in this case means looking through magazines and newspapers for ideas and calling places in advance of going to double check addresses, travel time, prices and hours of operation</p> <p>+ <u>realistic expectations</u>, which in this case means that the places/activities will not be exactly as they seemed from their ads and that some of our group will enjoy it more than others</p>

= happy

Well, we started off with a quote from English Literature, but you see that the problems we have here are solved with some simple math! I hope that all of your Yom Tov experiences add up to a wonderful time!

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