

## Turning points with life coach Randy Nathan

*Dear Coach Randy,*  
It's the middle of the summer and it's just not what I thought it would be. I'm bored and feeling down. I'm usually a very happy person, but for some reason I'm in this funk. What can I do?

*Sad and lonely*

Dear Sad and lonely,  
Summertime is often filled with ups and downs. On the one hand, you're off from school; on the other, you're preparing for the school year ahead and realize just how quickly time flies. I'm curious to know how long you've been feeling this way and what you're currently doing about it? How does this summer compare to previous summers? What about your friends? What are they doing? Are they home or away?

One activity you may want to consider trying is the "top three things that happened today" list. Starting now, list the three best things that happened to

Once you've finished, you will likely realize just how many things are going well. Plus, there will be a list to prove it. Looking at the best things that happen to you each day will have a tremendous effect on both your physical and mental well-being. Good luck.

*Dear Coach Randy,*  
I'm starting college in a few weeks, and I am feeling very nervous and apprehensive about leaving my parents and family. How can I stop feeling this way and become excited about college?

*Unsure*

Dear Unsure,  
How great it must be to openly acknowledge the role your family plays in your life and the anticipated change that will soon occur. How likely is it that your love and caring for them is stronger than you realized? Not knowing the type of relationship you have with your parents, what do you think is creating this feeling and why?

The big question I have is why do you want to stop feeling this way? Why not embrace this with open arms and find out where it takes you? Some people feel that in order for a person to truly understand happiness, one must experience sadness. How does that resonate with you?

What about writing down your thoughts about leaving, about your parents and family, your future, your past, and anything that comes to mind? Just let your mind loose and discover an inner energy that's looking to come out of you. Once you've had a chance to understand why you're feeling this way, how about developing a "good-bye" strategy. This way you can share your thoughts and feelings with your parents, and they will be able to see you and your feelings in an entirely new perspective.

I imagine your parents would be very grateful for your honesty and candor regarding this issue. Good luck.

**Randy Nathan, MSW, is a certified empowerment coach who works exclusively with high school and college-age students. Through the coaching process, he empowers and motivates young people to face the major challenges, transitions, and opportunities in their lives. For further information, visit [www.ypccoach.com](http://www.ypccoach.com).**

*Have a question for Coach Randy? High school- and college-age people can contact him by writing to [RealLife@njewishnews.com](mailto:RealLife@njewishnews.com).*



you today. Start with anything and fill in the three slots. At any time during the day when something "makes the list," place it in its proper order and remove the last item. Continue throughout the day looking for things to make the list. Try this for a week: keep a final "top three" each evening and then comparing them at the end. Make a game of it.

## Finding the right tutor

SINCE NO CHILD Left Behind federal legislation was enacted in 2001, private tutoring has become big business. Tutoring companies have catchy names like Failure Free Reading, Club Z! Inc., and Kidz University. Some employ high-powered, expensive radio and TV advertising and even direct-mail solicitation. So how can parents cut through the hype and find the right program for their child?

Dorothy Strickland, Samuel E. Proctor Professor of Education at Rutgers' Graduate School of Education, says the most important factor is how well the tutors are trained. "There's a lot of research to say that one-to-one [instruction] is a good thing," she said, "but who's to say what kind of training these people have?"

High-quality tutoring has always been available to struggling students whose parents could afford it. Working or retired teachers were usually hired on an hourly basis to work with children at home after school.

Then came No Child Left Behind, which requires poorly performing schools to dedicate a portion of their Title I federal assistance funds — allocated to schools with a significant number of low-income students — to the cost of providing private tutoring.

For-profit companies, accountable first to investors, sprang up to capitalize on this new flow of funds. Tutoring became a multi-billion-dollar business and ushered in the predictable array of advertisements, advertorials, and endorsements. Strickland says the quality of instruction by these companies is highly variable.

Students from low-income families who attend Title I schools that fail to meet state standards for at least three years are eligible to receive free supplemental educational services, including tutoring. Their parents may select a tutor from a list of state-approved providers. If they ask for it, they can receive guidance from their school or school district.

Some Title I schools contract with spe-

cific tutoring companies to offer on-site instruction after school. Since these companies are most accessible, many parents choose them without comparison shopping. This can be successful, Strickland says, because on-site programs that have a relationship with the school are more likely to be aligned with the school's curriculum than other programs.

But parents don't have to go that route. Often it's better to find a private tutor who relates well to the student, Strickland says. If the family meets Title I income requirements and the child's school has been rated as failing, the school is required by law to contract with the parents' tutor of choice and pay for the services from its Title I money.

More important than one-on-one time, Strickland says, is that the tutor be a trained and certified teacher. This is not always the case with private companies. "Research shows that smaller classes with teachers who are well trained, who take advantage of the smaller class with things like differentiated instruction, etc., are more successful," says Strickland. The same applies to tutors.

In addition to asking whether the tutor is trained and certified, Strickland offers the following tips for finding the right tutor:

- **Do your homework:** Ask for recommendations from teachers, principals, guidance counselors, and other parents. Ask the tutoring company for figures on how successful they have been (for example, the number of their students whose test scores or grades have improved, and by how much).
- **Use your own judgment:** Meet and interview the tutor, if possible.
- **Ask your child how he or she likes the tutor and the sessions.** The child won't learn if the experience isn't fun.
- **If there are learning disabilities or language barriers, look for a tutor who is experienced in dealing with them.** For children with learning disabilities, Strickland recommends consulting the National Center for Learning Disabilities at [www.nclld.org](http://www.nclld.org).

**For further information about finding a tutor, visit these Web sites:**

- Study Guides and Strategies: [www.studygs.net/tutoring.htm](http://www.studygs.net/tutoring.htm)
- National Tutoring Association: [www.ntatutor.org](http://www.ntatutor.org)
- Homework Tutoring: [www.homeworktutoring.com](http://www.homeworktutoring.com)
- About.com, then type in "tutoring" in the search box

## Your Turn

Real Life welcomes guest columnists. If you'd like to share your experiences, your outlook, or a moment in your life, e-mail [reallife@njewishnews.com](mailto:reallife@njewishnews.com) for column guidelines. Real Life is edited by Ron Kaplan.

## Torah haiku

by Ron Kaplan

### Va'et'hanan

Abandoned Moses:  
"Don't let this happen to you!  
"Mind the Commandments!"