

It's Not Just About the Children: Helping Parents Be Better Parents and Individuals

A Conversation with a Negba Parent



Advancing the wellbeing of children and youth is Negba's core mission, and parents are integral partners in Negba's care for their children. But the parents themselves possess individual needs, and these must not be overlooked. Michal is one example of how a parent grew immensely-alongside her children- as a result of Negba's targeted projects for parents.

"I originally approached Negba for help with one of my kids," said Michal, a single mother of three daughters. "Over the years Negba not only helped all of my children by putting them on a path to succeed, but it gave me so much personally, and helped me succeed in being a parent."

Living in an impoverished Beersheva neighborhood, Michal works extremely hard to provide for her family. Unemployment is anathema to her – though she's been eligible to file for it in the past – feeling it is wrong to live on taxpayers' expense if one can work. Whenever she needed to, Michal pounded the pavement until she found a job. She currently holds two of them; one as a restaurant kitchen worker, and another as a caregiver for seniors.

It was Michal's long work hours until midnight which led her to approach Negba, seeking an after-school framework to shelter her children from the neighborhood's unpleasant elements. And since she didn't have the time or the ability to help her daughters with their homework, she also sought academic assistance for them. Looking back almost eight years now, Michal reflects that it was one of the best decisions she ever made.

"My first daughter who attended Negba is now 18, working at a bank, taking a course there to advance, and plans to continue there after her army service," said Michal. "She got so much emotional support from Negba, and built up her self-confidence, which she had little of before. She learned to accept herself as she was, to make mistakes, and to fix them and move forward. She always tells me that without Negba, she has no idea where she'd be today."

Michal's second daughter, almost 17, also gained much help bolstering her self-esteem at Negba, and grew from the academic assistance. "Negba inspired her to learn, such as in the math program, when she saw that she was succeeding, and even doing better than her peers," recalled Michal. "It gave her a push that if she didn't learn, she wouldn't obtain a meaningful job or advance much in life. She realized that if she is persistent, she can succeed."

Michal's third and youngest daughter, 11, possesses learning difficulties and has been benefitting from Negba's academic enrichment for Negba for six years now. "She is socially adjusted and confident, but she gets lost in class academically," remarked Michal. "The learning assistance at Negba has been critical to her learning and trying to close gaps at school."

But perhaps one of the greatest benefits of Michal's involvement with Negba has been her own personal growth, both as an individual, and as a parent. She has participated in a number of facilitated Negba workshops on empowerment, communication, coping with challenges, and other topics. Some were joint sessions for parents and children, and others for parents only.

"The workshops give me skills in areas that are difficult for me, such as in interacting with my children. I learned how to be really present for my children when I am with them without distractions, and we now have better relationships and spend quality time together. I'm a mom who gives so much to my children and I needed to learn how to say 'no'. It was very hard at first. But now I can, and my kids learned it is best for them, too. Thanks to Negba's workshops, I'm a completely different parent, and person."

Negba Social Worker Albert Cohen, who has been accompanying Michal and her daughters throughout, agreed. "The most impactful part was the transformation Michal underwent," he said. "The Negba workshops opened her up to other parenting models. She learned how to speak to her children, and to set limits for the benefit of her entire family. But *she* made the change. Negba can only show parents the way. Parents are ultimately responsible for their children. Michal took that responsibility and changed her life and the life of her children."

