



*Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students*

**“Family Values”**  
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Everybody has different values, but it seems like people within a family often have the same values as each other. And these values get passed down through the generations. The main values in my family are compassion, family, truth, community, and education.

Both my mother and her mother, Grandmother Helen, believe in compassion, which in Hebrew is called *rachamim*. They each get teary-eyed when they listen to sad stories. For example, when my mother was a freshman in college, a girl on her floor was telling her about how her own grandmother had just died, and my mother cried even harder than her friend.

My Grandmother Helen also told me a story about compassion. It happened when she was first married. She had bought two expensive dresses and was coming home on the bus. There were two people in front of her talking about how they couldn't afford the roof over their heads this month. My Grandmother Helen felt so bad that when she got home she told my Grandfather Daniel that she wanted to return the dresses, but my Grandfather Daniel said that if she returned the dresses it would make things worse. Not only would it not help the people on the bus, but the person my Grandmother Helen bought the dresses from wouldn't get paid as much.

A very important value to my Dad's father, Grandfather Sam, is family, *mishpacha*. When he was in the army and he hadn't seen his parents for a while, the army gave him a chance to leave for a short time, but he was only allowed to go to Minnesota and his parents lived in New York. So his father came all the way to Minnesota, even though they would only see each other for a brief time.

My Dad's mother, Grandmother Shirley, also valued family. When my father proposed to my mother, and she said yes, my Dad called his parents in Florida to tell them the good news. In the 25 minutes it took my parents to drive home from the restaurant, my Grandmother Shirley had made a list of all the people she wanted to invite to the wedding. Her list was very long! But my Grandmother Shirley didn't want to eliminate anyone because they were all family, and she was close to each one of them—even the distant cousins. My dad says he got his belief in family from his parents. He thinks family is essential because you can rely on family members to get support.

Another value that my dad thinks is important is truth, *emet*. He says, “Truth is important on many levels. It's essential for one's relationships because that's how you build trust.” He and my mother believe that if you do something wrong, you should take responsibility for your mistake, and not lie about it. This is something my great grandfather believed in too because when my Grandfather Sam and his sister were kids, they went to their aunt's store in the Bronx and took some candy without paying for it. On the long train ride home to Brooklyn, my Grandfather Sam's sister took the candy out of the bag, and when my great grandfather realized that they had taken it without paying, he made them take the long train ride back to return it. They had to apologize and promised that they would never do it again.

There are times, though, when a person might do something that seems “wrong,” but my Grandmother Helen says you shouldn’t necessarily judge the person. She told me a story about when she was married with kids and was taking some school courses with a friend. One day, after they had attended three or four sessions, the friend called and said she had a cold and wasn’t going to be able to make it to class. So my Grandmother Helen collected the course material for her friend, and then she drove to her friend’s house to give her the copies. When she rang the doorbell the babysitter answered and said that the woman was out. My Grandmother Helen didn’t judge her; she just realized that some people have weaknesses as well as strengths.

My Grandmother Helen’s mother used to say, “Do unto others, as you would have others do unto you.” This is similar to how my Grandfather Sam was raised. He was told to be kind to everyone. When he was growing up, his family was poor, but they still gave food to a sick neighbor who was out of work. My Grandmother Shirley also believed in being good to other people. She raised a lot of money for a Cerebral Palsy organization.

My dad values community, *kehilla*, and social justice. He says that people should be treated fairly, and not judged by their economic status, skin color, or their religious beliefs.

My Grandfather Daniel, whom I was named after, believed in education, *cheenuch*, so much that it was like a religion to him. His religion was mathematics, education, and learning. When he asked a question and got an answer, he would always ask another question.

My Grandmother Helen also loves learning. When she was young, she enjoyed what she was learning at school. My Grandmother Helen still pursues learning because it makes her life more interesting.

My dad thinks education is one of the strongest Jewish values there is. The reason he says it’s a Jewish value is because Jews from long ago spent their lives studying the Talmud and that this has been passed on to us in the form of receiving an education. But unlike those Jews, who only allowed men to study the Talmud, my father believes in gender equality.

Many of my values are the same as my family’s values. I think listening to others is important because you can find out so much about a person from what they say.

Compassion and love are similar values because you need compassion to feel love, and love is essential because without love, you could feel lonely. You know you’re loved when someone really cares how you’re feeling. They’re interested in what you are doing every day, and they don’t get sick of you no matter how much you’re around. Being loved is a way to mark that you exist and matter to someone.

Family and friends are special to me because you can rely on the people you feel close to. They can help you through bad situations, and share good times with you as well.

I value education too because I think it makes me a more intelligent and interesting person. I also think that education will help me make better choices in the long run because I’m aware of the different possibilities.

There's one value that I have that's different from those of my family and that's music. When I listen, it helps me unwind. Even though nobody in my family mentioned music, I know that music has been important to many of them. My Grandfather Daniel wanted to be a conductor if he hadn't been a mathematician, and he used to spend hours listening to classical music. His brother was a popular musician who made records in the 50s.

Looking back I see that my grandparents all strongly believed in family and education, and this has been passed down to my parents, and they have passed it down to me.