



Celebrating the Outstanding Work of our Students

“Family Values”
by Gabe Zimmerman
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A few months ago my good friend Ethan, who is great tennis player, used tennis as metaphor for his Bar Mitzvah family values paper. I thought it was a good way to engage the audience, so I decided to use soccer to assist with my family values.

Soccer, for those who do not know, is often called the “beautiful game” and is the most popular sport in the world. Every 4 years the World Cup virtually stops the world in it’s tracks, even more than the Olympics that I will talk about later tonight. Why is it the beautiful game? Well I think it is called that because it requires precision teamwork, beautiful passing, trust, agility, selflessness, intelligence, a good defense, rhythm and humor.

To assemble my team of values, I first asked a small group of my relatives to find a family picture and write about what values they felt were shown by the photos. I also gave them a list of values and asked them to rank them in priority order and then explain their ranking. How my family responded was interesting, [except for a few (DAD) who did not do it at all.] Some ranked them 1 by 1, 1-11, which is the number of players on a soccer team, while others did the rankings in groups. Before reading any responses I did my own rankings. I wanted to compare my rankings with my relatives’ rankings. I then analyzed the “data”. From all of this I “drafted” my team of values.

My number one value was friendship, “*chah-vey-root*”. There is nothing more beautiful to me than a good friendship. It is like being a center midfielder, because you need to be there for both the defense and the offense. Friendship also embodies all the other values I will discuss. You share your thoughts with friends, help each other with homework or on the field, you are truthful and loyal to them, you share humor with them, and they can help you be courageous.

Cousin Jesse ranked friendship first saying, “There is nothing more important. Compared to friends and family, everything else on the list comes a distant second.” I always knew that Jesse and I had a lot in common, good looks, soccer and brains.

My Aunt Geri said that “true friendship is one of the greatest gifts of living.” Andrea said “I couldn’t live happily without my friends. WE support each other emotionally, complain to each other, teach each other, and have fun together. It reminds me of my long time friends Sasha and Jake Haase. We all work together and score goals and they helped me be MVP this season.

But, in thinking about the meaning of friendship, I remembered a time in the beginning of 6th grade. My really good friend Gabe K was having a difficult time adjusting to Baruch Middle School. He was very unhappy because he did not know many kids. I talked with him on the telephone reciting my Gabriel Iglesia routine to make him laugh. Because I was helping Gabe I did not even realize I was on the telephone for 15 minutes, a telephone record for me. Mostly Gabe needed some laughter and emotional support that a true friend can give.

Number 2 on my values team is my sweeper, humor, “*hoo-more.*” On the field I often play sweeper. I protect the goalie, and I move trouble out of the way. Humor helps one stay optimistic about life. I use humor a lot, making jokes to my friends, teachers, parents, and Kyra. When I think someone is in a rough situation and can use a good laugh I make a joke since it will help them, and besides, no one can resist a good joke from me.

Many shared cousin Mara's view that "having a good sense of humor and not taking yourself too seriously was very important," as long as we remember that "teasing can be hurtful so it must not be "hurtful teasing"

I think that is why my parents sometimes say before they tease each other, "take this as a joke." I guess that's good self-protection. Grandpa David said, "You should take life seriously but always look for things to laugh about."

This summer on the last night of camp, Eli, Pablo and I gave everyone a good laugh with a silly skit. This comedy was a great anecdote for so many campers who were sad to be leaving camp.

I agree with my uncle Jon that "you must be able to laugh out loud even at yourself".

Education, "chee-nook", is my goalkeeper. If you have a good education, as my father Brian would say, nothing can get by you, and you can depend on it to help you win in life, not just on the field. Also, everyone in my immediate family and extended family, are all well educated. They have inspired me to push my limits and never give up on my schoolwork. My plan is to get into Stuyvesant HS, like cousins Jordan and Jesse and my Dad.

One surprise was that both Aunt Geri and my mother had the same response about education. They listed it last. Wow. If it was last, why go to school. Then I understood. They both thought that you need to be "educated" to accomplish the other values, so that maybe the whole scheme of values is circular. It was striking that they both had that same thought.

I think my mother was right since she said that "learning is being able to analyze and think critically about things," which includes understanding my values. Luckily critical thinking is pretty natural for me. I am always questioning what I am told (which does not always make my parents happy.)

Cousin Jesse was short and to the point. "Education is something that's good for you, as long as it does not require spending 3 years in law school." (I know all the lawyers in this room agree.) Cousin Andrea said I always like to learn new things, not always academic and I like to learn by listening. I agree.

My right and left wings are Music, "moo see ca". They set me free to create. I enjoy listening to music as well as playing music with my buddies, Josh, David, and Jack, and I am so lucky that my friend Miles gives me free piano lessons. Music is a way of expressing emotions as well as calming me. It is a secret language that my musician friends and I understand. We can discuss rhythm and beats in short hand. Music is also entertainment for those listening. I also use music to let out my anger. When I am really mad I bang on the loudest drum.

My mom does not mind, but worries that the neighbors will get annoyed. I am lucky that cousins Robert and Dana have taken me under their drumming wings.

Grandpa David and Grandma Carla said "It's the music within us that adds a tremendous amount to how much we enjoy the world.", "Music is a solace, a universal language. Music is a currency tome. I speak in lyrics from the billions of songs I know, and a ways have a song in my head."

I think, for me music and soccer are connected, because soccer has an unwritten and universal language that choreographs the game.

Courage, "oh-metz lehv", is center forward for me. It is being up front trying to challenge for a goal. Having personal courage helps me in a lot of situations, especially tough ones where you have to stand up for what you believe in. I think that like all people I need to have courage every day to deal with any problems, big or small, from a kid calling you a name to a kid pushing you on the floor.

When talking about courage my cousin Stu said it best when he said “courage will be telling Anna and Benny that I do not want to go on the roller coaster. It’s being honest with yourself so you can face other people’s reactions.”)

This Bar Mitzvah is actually the best example of my courage because I had to face other people’s reactions. First, after seeing how great Kyra did at her Bat Mitzvah I was very nervous that I could not prepare such good papers, and present them so well. But I think I have well-written and thought out papers, and so far so good on the delivery.... Right?????

But the real courage with this Bar Mitzvah is this doing this type of Bar Mitzvah. Since attending my friends’ Bar Mitzvah’s, starting with Eli and David’s, it really struck me how different this is from theirs and my other friends. I am concerned that my friends and their family will think this is a “weird” Bar Mitzvah and not really Jewish. And I am ambivalent about my Jewish beliefs. I accept that this type of Bar Mitzvah is what my family believes, but I also came to appreciate the value of the traditional Bar Mitzvah service and other traditional events like Shabbos dinners. I do partly wish that my Bar Mitzvah was like my friends were, but also realize that through this Bar Mitzvah process I have learned a lot about myself, my family, and an important part of Jewish history. Like my friends, I had a goal to be a bar mitzvah, and I am glad I had the courage to achieve it. I also hope that my friends and their family now understand and value this Bar Mitzvah ceremony too.

Justice and fairness, “*tzedek tzeh-dek*,” – are my twin pillars on defense. To me these values mean that everyone should be treated equally and fairly, and not be discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity or culture. Treating people fairly means showing them respect even if you are not friends with them. Treating people equally means not necessarily treating them the SAME but treating them based on their needs. In my household, I play close attention on how fairly my parents treat me as compared to my sister. But lately I have realized that my sister and I have different needs and wants, so we can’t be treated exactly the same.

In my parent’s stories about work, I see how they try to ensure that justice and fairness is done for all the people that come to court.

Grandpa David said that “everyone deserves a fair break and a chance in this world”. “Its what’s drives us,” said Jesse.

Truthfulness and honesty, “*emet*”, round out my team of values. I think it is basic to any relationship with friends or relatives. Being truthful to a parent can lead to independence because if you are honest to a parent they believe you will be responsible and use good judgment, so they will feel more at ease to give you freedom. Being honest about something you have done but were not supposed to do, helps to lessen the consequences sometimes. If you do something you are not supposed to and if you don’t tell the truth about it, the consequences are greater because there will be consequences for what you did and for lying.

I believe not telling the truth involves saying something not true. If you are not asked and don’t volunteer information, that is not a lie. Another way to say this, an omission is not a lie.

One time in 6th grade when my friend David came over, we rented a movie on “pay for view.” It was not the most age appropriate movie. When my dad came home and asked what we rented, I couldn’t lie, because he would find out and because telling the truth is very important. So I just told him the truth. He was a little annoyed but he said it was better than lying. (By the way the movie was BEERFEST).

For my mother truth (along with honesty and loyalty) is the ultimate or most you can give another person.

What a person's values are is really about who they are and how they live their lives. We usually just live without pausing to really think about what we are doing and why. But I must admit this paper has really made me stop and think!! It helped me focus on what's most important to me when interacting with the world. It makes me more aware of why I do what I do and for that I am glad to have done this paper. If the beautiful game is a metaphor for life, then I believe that my chosen team of values will be a winning one.