Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks supports professional development for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for diverse learners.

Hidden Sparks’ programs combine school-based professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, classroom observation and coaching. Our philosophy is that by helping teachers meet the needs of struggling students, ultimately all students will benefit.

Now in its 10th year, Hidden Sparks has trained 210 coaches in 69 Jewish day schools in New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Boca Raton, and Chicago, and 6 Israeli cities (Jerusalem, Modiin, Lod, Ramle, Ra’anana, Tel Aviv).
Welcome to Hidden Sparks Without Walls. We will be starting at 8:30pm.

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your audio connection has been muted.

Asking Questions & Sharing Thoughts:
You are encouraged to ask questions and share your thoughts on the Chat.

Please activate the chat feature by clicking in the “Chat bubble” on the control panel on the bottom of your screen.

Audio:
If you would like to call in via phone for audio, please click on the phone icon, select “I will call in” and you will be provided with the call-in number.
How to Have Difficult Discussions with Children

With Dr. Rona Novick
April 2, 2019
Our Guest: Dr. Rona Novick

Rona Milch Novick, PhD, Co-Educational Director, is the Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration at Yeshiva University and holds the Raine and Stanley Silverstein Chair in Professional Ethics and Values. She served for many years as the Coordinator of Child Psychology in the Division of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry at Schneider Children’s Hospital and as the Clinical Director of the Alliance for School Mental Health, providing outreach services, treatment and training to schools, families and communities. She developed the BRAVE bully prevention program and is a trained cognitive behavior therapist with her own private practice. As one of two educational directors for Hidden Sparks, Dr. Novick provides training, supervision and ongoing mentoring to the Hidden Sparks teams of coaches, principals and Internal Coaches. Dr. Novick has been featured in an ELItalk.
Overview of the Session

We will explore how we have meaningful conversations considering developmental issues and the importance of relationship. We will consider the when, how and what of successful communication.
Session Goals

1. Build awareness of when to best speak with children
2. Learn tools to set the stage for success
3. Uncover pitfalls to avoid
4. Beyond the discussion – strengthening the relationship
Setting the Stage

• Think about difficult but impactful conversations you have had

• What helped you hear that conversation?

• Use the chat room to share what made the conversation possible/positive for you.

• How will you set the stage?

• Physical comfort, personal preferences, direct vs. indirect approach
## Developmental Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can listener hear?</th>
<th>Preschool</th>
<th>Child</th>
<th>Adolescent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brief ideas, practical concrete plans, immediate needs, own needs</td>
<td>Concepts, long term plans, needs of others</td>
<td>All, but filtered through invulnerability and distrust of authorities</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

| What will be listener’s primary worry/concern? | What will happen to me? What will change? | Safety of self and others, what will change, social consequences | Autonomy, change, social consequences, security |

| What does listener need/want to know? | Reassurance, your continued connection and approval | Accurate info, reassurance, resources | Accurate info, reassurance, resources |
Validation and Empathic Listening

• Everyone wants to feel heard – How do you communicate that they have been heard?

• Validation is not agreement.

• Empathy – ability to put oneself in another’s shoes – to feel another’s pain.

• Empathic listening – communicating that you understand the feelings of the listener - use the chat room to share ways that you show you understand another’s feelings.
Timing Issues

• When possible . . . Not in crisis
• Think about what happens before and after
• How much time is needed for the conversation?
How: Language, Words, Tone

Body language is important too
Non-incendiary, calming, positive, growth emphasis

Vocabulary sensitive to level
Words, lingo they need to know

Calm tone
Need not be unfeeling
Conversation Starters: Indirect Entree

• Books
• Videos
• News events
Conversations Aiming for Change/Promotion of Growth

• Substance use, challenging behavior – use the chat room for other examples of when you might have this type of conversation

DO NOT:

• Blame, induce guilt
• Focus on past

DO:

• Engage wishes, healthy goals, speak to the positive
• Balance with realism
• Communicate hope, your continued presence and continuing opportunities to talk
Conversations to Explain/Prepare

Personal & family transitions, trauma, illness

DO

• Take care of yourself – be the grown up
• Listen for questions, worries – give what is needed
• Normalize
• When possible, choose time and setting
• Balance anxiety/realism with hope/optimism
• Mr. Rogers: Look for the helpers

DO NOT

• Induce guilt, blame
• Catastrophize
• Create “forbidden fruit” – it is sweeter
Beyond the Discussion

- Before, during and after discussion think about what will happen next.
- How are you growing the relationship/connection?
- Have you opened the door to future, continued conversation?
Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tuesday, May 14, 2019</th>
<th>Giving Effective Feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>For Teachers</td>
<td>Presented by Joe Hirsch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are interested in bringing Hidden Sparks to your school or city, please contact us: 212-767-7707 or sara@hiddensparks.org
Contacting Hidden Sparks

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