

I'm speaking from the perspective of a child of wholly imperfect parents — physically and verbally abusive and a whole lot more that I will leave up to the reader's imagination — who has been to (good) therapy and *baruch Hashem* came out healthy and whole. I have an excellent relationship with my parents today. Of course, our relationship is not the typical loving parent-to-child sort; sometimes I feel that I'm the adult in the relationship, and at times my interactions with them come from a place of pity. But that's exactly what the world has to know: The goal of proper, healthy therapy is to enable you to have the best possible relationship with your parents under the circumstances.

This involves, but is not limited to, learning to understand where your parents come from and acknowledging that they did the best they could considering their limitations or handicaps, and working hard to let go of your anger and accept that this was Hashem's plan for you. It may also involve learning to recognize your triggers and setting healthy and clear boundaries in a respectful way.

If you are in therapy, whether as a teen or an adult, you must take responsibility for your own life and ask yourself: Is my therapist causing me to move away from my parents or toward them in the long run? While it is normal and even expected to go through a period of withdrawal from your parents while you are in therapy, the overriding goal must always be a relationship.

Of course, there are extreme circumstances where a parent has a severe personality disorder and it's impossible to have a relationship with them, but that is *far* less common than we are led to believe by therapists and angry children.

One last point: The beneficiary in a relationship with parents, however limited the relationship, is the child

more than the parents. A child — even an adult child — without parents is rootless and floundering, as are grandchildren without grandparents. In a moment of heat, with the validation provided by the therapist who obviously does not have your best long-term interests in mind, you are giving up eternal bonds for generations. Total healing cannot happen when natural bonds are cut; Hashem created us to need our parents.

Alienating our parents simply allows us to stew in our resentment and feel validated that we are right and our parents were wrong. Staying in the relationship, with all the inner work it entails, may seem the more difficult route, but it's the one that leads to true, inner healing and *the menuchas hanefesh* of a life well-lived.

Name Withheld, NY

Relationship is the Ultimate Goal

[Counterpoint / When Therapists Take Away Your Child - Issue 794]

I am responding to A.D.'s letter about parental alienation. He writes: "If you're wondering why your relationship with your children is respectful and cordial, but not real, warm, or loving..." A.D. captured the crux of the issue: Even if your parents were imperfect/not emotionally healthy/neglectful/abusive/fill in the blank, the Torah — and common decency — does not allow one to completely cut off a relationship with them. It may be a compromised or limited relationship, like that of A.D. with his mother, but you must still have a relationship.

Contrary to what you may be thinking,