



The Relationships We Make

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IN MY ROLE AS A PJ LIBRARY PROFESSIONAL

I spend a lot of time developing relationships with parents, families, Jewish educators, and community leaders. To me, PJ Library is built on the foundation that relationships are the core of everything, from family networks to community connections. My background in the field of community mental health and my professional expertise as a psychotherapist allow me to approach the work that we do with a unique perspective. I often ask myself: How can I make the most of my time and invest in the relationships that feed and fuel my community?

Here's where I start:

- ✧ When I am in conversation I truly, truly listen. I don't listen in the way that I'm waiting for my turn (I save that for my personal relationships, by the way). I use my skills of listening, attunement, and mirroring. They are invaluable if you want someone to feel heard and attended to, and they come easy with practice.
- ✧ I try to stay curious with families, community partners, and donors. As a parent, approaching relationships with curiosity is natural for me, especially in the way I talk to my children. What are you up to? How was your day? I don't know the answers before I ask the questions, and the same can be true for the people I meet in the world of PJ Library. When I'm curious, I can prepare to be surprised, impressed, and moved.

- ✧ Responding to emails and phone calls may seem like an administrative task. In fact, it is the foundation of the relational work I do for PJ Library. I can't always be on top of my emails, but having an "out of office" reply that indicates my availability and intention to respond is a simple and effective tool. When I answer the phone, I try to smile. The person on the other end can hear it.
- ✧ Social media is a tool I use for connection. "Likes," "Shares," or "Comments" do not make my community, but they can provide a place where relationships start. I created a Facebook group where Jewish families can ask each other questions about programs, products, and even housing. They may not develop friendships from this platform, but they can coordinate playdates and meet up at local programs and events.

At a recent PJ Library playdate, I was struck by an example of how relationships are at the core of PJ Library. Two mothers were in attendance, both of whom had lost their fathers in unusually sudden and traumatic ways. I knew about one woman's grief and loss because she had posted on Facebook, and I followed up with a date at the park while we chased her toddler and she shared her experiences. I know how powerful it is to connect with those going through a similar experience, so I introduced the women to one another with the framework that they might have some connections, particularly since they are both grieving. By the end of the event, the women had exchanged numbers, wiped their tears, and discovered that they grew up within a few towns of each other on the opposite side of the country from where we currently live. My relationship with them helped build their relationship with one another. And that is what it's all about.



LIORA BROSBE is a trained marriage and family therapist and has a small private psychotherapy practice where she sees adults. As part of her work with Sprout: Helping Jewish Families Grow Together, she manages the PJ Library and PJ Our Way programs in the East Bay. Liora lives with her family in the San Francisco Bay area.