

The Schmooze Stories with a Yiddish Twist

THE NERDS SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH*

*The Yiddish words meaning to “inherit the Earth” are “irshenen di erd.”

by
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Bill Gates said [Rule #11]: Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.

Which of the following words describe a “nerd”?

- . One whose IQ exceeds his weight. (Urban Dictionary)
- . An individual persecuted for his superior skills or intellect, most often by people who fear or envy him.
- . An individual who does not conform to society's beliefs that all people should follow trends and do what their peers do.
- . A stereotypical label used to describe a person that is socially inadequate (“inadakuat”).
- . A four letter word, but a six figure income (“hakhnose”). Think Bill Gates, but typically on a smaller scale.
- . The person you will one day call “Boss” (“balebos”). (Again, think Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Mitch Resnick, and Jack Dorsey, co-founder and CEO of Twitter.)

The correct answer: All of the above.

Who is probably the most famous nerd on TV? Steve Urkel, on Family Matters. He wears thick glasses, “high-water” or “flood” pants, held up with suspenders (“shleykes”), multi-colored cardigan sweaters, and has a high-pitched voice. He’s also a bumbling klutz.

Having taught high school for 35 years, I’ve come across many so-called “nerds.” They’ve become our physicians, lawyers, scientists, engineers and computer whizzes.

There’s a relatively new study titled “high school reunion effect.” Joseph Allen, professor of psychology at the University of Virginia, led the study. He says “It’s...revenge of the quiet, good kids.” (In Yiddish, we call them “gut kind”--good kid.

There have always been kids who had boyfriends (“khaver” or “khaveyrim”) or girlfriends before everyone else. These kids were accepted at sororities and fraternities like Alpha Nu Theta, Alpha Phi, Alpha Sigma Phi, and Alpha Zeta. They started partying earlier than most kids, and were always hanging out with the physically attractive girls (“tsatskeh”) or good-looking (“shane”) guys. In one word, they were “COOL.”

If we studied “coolness” at 13, how does that translate into success by age 23? Researchers at the Univ. of Virginia published an article in the journal (“der zhurnal”), Child Development. What were the findings?

Those “cool kids” were more likely to have bigger troubles later in life. “Di velt iz grois, ireh tsores noch gresser.” (The world is big, its troubles still bigger.)

As young (“yung”) adults, they were using 40% more drugs and alcohol than the “not so cool” kids. They were also 22% more likely to be having troubles with the law (“dos gezets”). What else did the research show? The teens considered “cool” in middle school, received ratings that were 24% LOWER than their less cool peers. “Gey vays” (go know/go figure)!

Joseph Allen, said that to his knowledge, this is the first research that looks at how these so-called cool teens (“tsenerlingn”) will fare when they reach adulthood.

“You see the person who was cool...did exciting things

that were intimidating and seemed glamorous at the time and then five or 10 years later, they are working in a menial job and have poor relationships and such, and the other kid who was quiet and had good friends but didn't really attract much attention and was a little intimidated is doing great."

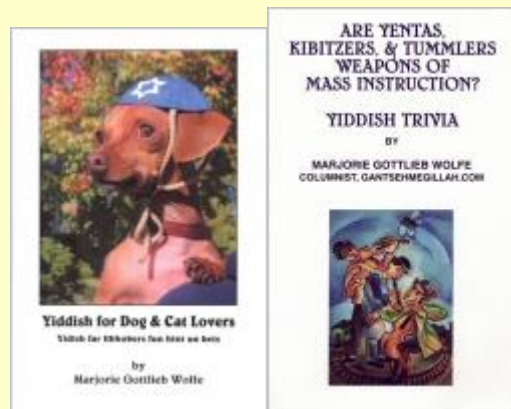
So, mom and dad, "her nor!" (listen): Be proud of that quiet young son or daughter who's NOT so "cool." Sit down ("zetst zich avek"). Relax. He/she is headed down the road to success.

MARJORIE WOLFE loves the following Yiddish wisdom/folk expression: "Der was hot dos visn un git dos nit iber tsu ondere iz vi a blum in dem midber vu dort is keyner tsu hobn fargenign fun blum." (He who acquires knowledge without imparting it to others is like a flower in the desert where there is no one to enjoy it.)

Source: "Yiddish Wisdom for Parents" by Rae Meltzer

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Marjorie Gottlieb Wolfe is the author of two books:



"Yiddish for Dog & Cat Lovers" and "Are Yentas, Kibitzers, & Tumblers Weapons of Mass Instruction? Yiddish Trivia." To order a copy, go to her website: MarjorieGottliebWolfe.com

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