

Grow like the Trees

By Sara Debbie Gutfreund

6 lessons in honor of Tu B'Shvat, the birthday of the trees.

1. Let go of the past. Trees let go of their dead leaves. Evaluate whether our choices today are being made with our present set of values and beliefs or whether we are holding onto ideas that no longer help us grow.
2. Growth takes time. The greatest oak was once just a little nut that held its ground. Sometimes it seems like we aren't moving forward despite our efforts to grow. But growth is often subtle and slow. Consistency and courage nurtures our growth even when we can't see any progress. Hold your ground. One day we will reach further than we can imagine.
3. Plant today. The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago; the second best time is now. It's never too late to begin something new. Every seed we plant counts and is a gift to the next generation.
4. Give life. Imagine if trees gave off Wi-Fi signals; we'd be planting them without stop! But trees produce the oxygen we breathe. They give us life. We can also give life by teaching others what we learn, by inspiring each other and by choosing to use our resources to give.
5. Reframe darkness. Seeds are buried deep beneath the earth's dark surface. They shiver in the frozen soil, their shells break apart, leaving them open and exposed. But the seed wouldn't grow if it was cradled in the light or if its shell was encased in armor. Darkness and brokenness often surround us before we can break through the surface. Sometimes the worst moments come before the greatest light.
6. Reach for the sky. New trees are fragile. They can't reach very high. But even the smallest tree looks like it's trying to touch the sun. Reach for the sky. The higher we aim, the more motivated we will be to reach for greatness.