

What brings meaning to my life? It is an interesting question. There are a lot of things that bring *joy* to my life but not *meaning*. For example, I could say that my phone, tv, and computer bring meaning to my life, but, in reality, they do not. Those items bring happiness to my life because they can make tasks easier and faster and can provide a more convenient way to get information, talk to people, and play games, but none of that brings deeper meaning to life. In fact, if you took away those distractions, I would have to socialize more, which could then possibly lead to me finding meaning instead of just joy.

For example, when I go to Jewish summer camp, I find meaning as well as joy. At camp, I can be myself and spend time with caring, loving people who I can call my second family. In order to have meaning in your life, you have to have a place where you can be yourself, where the people you hang out with are accepting of every part of you. Now, that could be your own home, which it is for me, but also, it is important to have a different place that you can be yourself and feel totally comfortable.

In addition to Jewish summer camp, the things that bring meaning, and in some cases also joy, to my life are: having a family that will support every step I take in life, having friends that I can rely on, and being able to travel to many places. I love to explore new places. Also, being able to take part in sports and activities that give me teammates and coaches that I can talk to when I have trouble talking to others allows for meaningful connections. I also feel such gratitude for having a place to sleep at night, for living in a place with mountains to climb, creeks to tube in, and paths to bike, run, and jog.

Being a Jew in the 21st century, and creating my Jewish identity, brings meaning to my life. It brings me joy, but Judaism also asks me to explore my beliefs and be part of a community. If there is something that you honestly believe you cannot live without that gives you joy, then know that it can also bring *meaning* to your life.