



The Four Change Boosters of Innovation: Social Connectors

Connecting Conversation B: Creating Lives of Action and Purpose

*From our I*Express Innovation Initiative*

In our work in educational change, we have seen the impact a social connector conversation can have. The value cannot be overstated. It builds community and fosters relationships which are core design principles in our learning models and it gives us insight into what our congregants are valuing/thinking about.

To that end, we have created a guide and provided texts to support a new and meaningful social connector conversation around *creating lives of action and purpose*. Your team can use this recommended tool at your their discretion. It can be used at virtually any time during the year with any size group. The composition of the group will vary from congregation to congregation. The conversation can be used in the beginning of the year as a catalyst to forge connections and create community. It will be equally effective as a tool to deepen existing connections mid-year or even at the end of the year. In some conversations, it will be a mix of veteran and new participants while in others, it might be only veterans., Or you may want to create a new group which includes different constituencies to further relationship building, expand the circles of impact, and gain a better understanding of more of your families.

Notes for Facilitator: *Welcome group and thank them for joining. Explain that we will be spending the next 45-60 minutes together learning some things about ourselves and each other in the context of exploring what it means to live lives of action and purpose and how that can impact our Jewish future and the future of our children. Explain that the Hopes and Dreams conversation that some of us may have experienced previously and conversations like these can be a catalyst to create and/or deepen connections in a meaningful way and to engender cohesion and community of purpose.*

Part 1: Connection Questions

1. Facilitator instructs all participants to individually make introductions and explain their connection to the synagogue.
2. Facilitator asks each participant: **In your opinion, what does it mean to live a life of action and purpose?** Ask each participant to share and generate a list that all can see and include the name of who offered up the suggestion as well.



3. Facilitator asks the group to spend a few minutes looking over the list of responses and asks each participant to identify someone who they know personally, a historical or public figure, who they believe embodies this idea. Invite participants then to discuss, in small groups of 2 or 3, the person you chose and to explain why you chose that person. *If you are meeting with a small group, consider doing this sharing with the whole group.*

Part 2: Connection Texts

Facilitator introduces texts. Facilitator will explain that by examining notable people from today and our history, we can be inspired to live our own lives of action and purpose. Their example can act as a catalyst or at least spur our thinking about this question..

You will find short texts about these notable people below in a separate handout. Assign people in groups of 2 or 3 one text to read together. Each group reads their assigned text, answers the discussion questions and then shares their thoughts with the larger group.

1. Lady Gaga
2. Lin Manuel Miranda
3. Rabbi Akiva
4. Ruth Bader Ginsberg
5. Louis Brandeis

Discussion Questions:

- Did you know who this person was prior to reading this text?
- What did you learn about the passions of this person from the text?
- What did you learn about their tenacity from this text?
- In what way do you think this person made/or will make a difference?
- What can you take from this text that can help inform your life?
- What life lessons would you like your child to learn from this?

After everyone has had a chance to read their text and discuss the questions, bring the group back together and have each pair or triad share some of their conversation with the larger group.

Part 3: Living a Jewish Life Today

Now that we have had a chance to consider how some people live lives of action and purpose, how can we make the connection to our own lives? As you think about the type of people you hope your children will become and what passions they might devote themselves to, **what are some things that you are doing to help shape who your children become?**

Please take two minutes to consider this question. You may want to jot down your thoughts. Please turn to a partner and share.



Part 3 continued

The next two questions to consider are:

What are some things in this changing world that are getting in the way?

What strategies do you use to help you deal with those things that are challenging?

Please take two minutes to consider these questions and share.

What we've captured today has given us a chance to think deeply about our values, our hopes for our children, and to get to know one another better. It will also help inform the direction of our new learning model. Our next step is to analyze the data and then apply what we have learned from the data to our model design..

Part 4: Group Reflection and Next Steps

Go around and ask everyone to respond to this reflection question:

What is one thing you are still thinking about or hope to do as a result of this meeting?

- **Thank** everyone for being so forthcoming and sharing their personal stories.
- **Ask** the participants to help make your innovations successful by talking to others about this conversation.
- **Promise** participants that you will follow-up with them soon.

