

MENSCH-IFY: A Family Learning Adventure for Jewi-ish Families

BACKGROUND:

Our polling of unaffiliated parents of diverse Jewish backgrounds identifies a desire to raise their children to be mensches without the formal requirement of attending traditional "religious school."

These parents thirst for next level "parent and me" experiences without having to over-commit and over-schedule their families. They seek to fill their minds with the skills to raise kind, compassionate, conscientious and resilient mensches with integrity and honor.

Surveying the wider community, we have not discovered any such existing programs, built on the model of parent and me with deeper Jewish content and wide open arms toward the interfaith and under-engaged community.

Mensch-ify is a developmentally appropriate program that builds upon the parent-child co-learning experience, and focuses on the kinds of families that are not expected to join a synagogue. Moreover, by focusing on their stated interests, Mensch-ify takes people where they are and invites them into engagement with the greater Jewish and synagogue communities. Combining stories, songs, art, movement, and play, Mensch-ify provides Jewish families of all stripes with the tools they need to live a Jewish life that works for them.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How can Jewish values guide meaningful parenting?
- What do children need to learn to become kind, compassionate, caring citizens?
- Can parents and children meaningfully learn simultaneously about Judaism?
- Does having a synagogue community enrich the lives of Jewish families with young children?

GOALS:

- Parents will gain a specific set of tools and skills to raise their children as Jewish mensches, defined as young people who are kind, responsible, and who care for the world around them.

- Children will learn how to live as Jewish mensches in their everyday lives: to practice kindness and compassion, engage in activities to improve the world, and act with integrity.
- Families will obtain basic knowledge of Jewish texts, traditions, and rituals that will sustain their goals of raising mensches.
- New families will help create a supportive community and Jewish second home for themselves in connection with current members of the congregation.

DAILY SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

0:00-20:00: Family Gathering

- Opening Song
- Family Circle Time: Sharing Oys and Joys/Tov-Lo Tov; Answering a Question of the Day
- Havdalah: Separate out the past week, starting the new week with this family experience

20:00-30:00: Mensch-ify My...

- Skit or song to introduce theme of the day
- Transition Time
- At this time Mini Mensches (Nursery/Pre K children) have option to go into classroom or stay with families

30:00-1:20: Activity Chug 1: Family Mensch Time

- Creating something together, family plans and conversation
- Focus on activity that uses parents effectively--what can they do and work on/talk about with their kids

1:20-1:30: Hafsakah (break/snack) for Just Mensches

- Children go to same-age spaces/classrooms for snacks together, saying blessings

1:20-2:15 Adults: Spiritual Parenting Group Learning (this includes Hafsakah)

1:30-2:15

Activity Chug 2: Just Mensches (Mini Mensches, K-1, 2-3, older grade track)

- 2 different 20-minute activities
- Play based, movement based, art, music, text, ritual; each activity should feel different and engage different learning modalities

Adults: Spiritual Parenting Group Learning

2:15-2:30: Closing Reflection Circle:

- Review what it means to be a mensch: short and sweet phrase
- Share what am you are taking away, how you will be a mensch based on what I learned today
- Pass out Carpool Conversations (Questions for car ride home) and At Home “Try This” Activity

Hashkiveinu

SCOPE AND SEQUENCE OVERVIEW

SESSION	DATE	TOPIC
1	9/30/18	Opening Session: What is a Mensch? ***Online make up session for partners who join later in year
2	10/7/18	Mensch-ify the Mitzvah: Welcoming Guests (Sukkot)
3	10/21/18	Mensch-ify Me
4	11/4/18	Mensch-ify the Mitzvah: Helping People in Need (Mitzvah Day)
5	11/18/18	Mensch-ify Chanukah
6	12/9/18	Mensch-ify My Family
7	1/6/19	Mensch-ify My Community: Pay It Forward Social Action Event: CANCELLED
8	1/20/19	Mensch-ify Tu BiShvat (In Nature)
9	2/3/19	Mensch-ify My School
10	2/24/19	Mensch-ify Shabbat (or Mensch-ify My Community)
11	3/10/19	Mensch-ify with Special People
12	3/24/19	Mensch-ify with My Friends
13	4/6/19	Mensch-ify Passover (Exodus in the Park)
14	4/28/19	Mensch-ify My Playground
15	5/5/19	Mensch-ify the Mitzvah: Visiting the Sick