

# Positive Thinking

***“They Can Because They Think They Can!” -Virgil***

**Taking your pulse:**

- How are you feeling right now?
- On a scale from 1-10 rate yourself.
- Jot down on a piece a paper your score.
- Try to identify what is making you feel that way.

**Positive Thinking Activity:**

**Directions:** Remember a day when all was right with the world- a day that exceeded your wildest expectations! Imagine this day as distinctly as possible. Remember as many details as you can. Let the following questions help you fill in the details.

1. *Who was involved?*
2. *How did those who were involved contribute?*
3. *What role did you play?*
4. *How did you feel?*
5. *Who did you tell about your day?*
6. *What words did you use to describe the day?*
7. *What made it so great? The people? The location? The weather? Or was it just a normal day when things looked brighter and better and felt like there were endless possibilities?*

**A day I remember fondly.....**

**Reflection: Now rate yourself again.**

- How many scores went up?
- Why do you think that is?

**What Science teaches us: The Positive Psychology experiment**

**Implications for our Work: Our tradition has a lot to say about that!**

# What does our Tradition Say?

## Positive Thinking

**Introduction:** During the day, when a challenge arises how do you respond? As you read the following story consider-**Do you ever feel like Shimon and Reuven?**

### **Shimon and Reuven See Mud** (Midrash Rabbah Shemot)

At the parting of the Sea of Reeds, during the Exodus out of Egypt, **600,000** Jews escaped. When the Sea of Reeds divided, **599,998** Jews were filled with wonder. Right before their eyes, they saw the waters separate into two sides, as dry land emerged. As they watched, huge banks of water froze into solid walls – it was a miracle! But during this time, the other two Jews, Shimon and Reuven, were looking at their feet, and all they saw was mud. Shimon complained, “For so many years all I did was work with mud. I walked in mud to make brick after brick from that mud. Every single day my feet were covered in mud. All I saw was mud!! And now I am on my way to freedom, and I am still stuck in mud.” Reuven agreed. “And we have to walk so far. If God wanted to make a miracle, God could have carried us back to Canaan. But instead, we have to walk! We have to walk through mud, & walking through mud is much harder, and my feet hurt.” Everyone else walked along in awe of all of the miracles surrounding them. But for Shimon & Reuven, there were no miracles, all they saw was mud.

**Activity:** Turn to a person at your table and spend 5 minutes answering the following questions and consider the following questions below.

### Questions to Consider

- What did Shimon and Reuven miss because they were so unhappy?
- Have you ever felt like Shimon and Reuben?
- Think of a time when you were so unhappy that it prevented you from having a good time?
- What did the rest of the Israelites see because they were open to a new beginning?
- Have you ever felt like the rest of the Israelites?
- What did you do to help you remember to appreciate the things happening around you?

# Gratitude

## Leah and her Son

*“When Leah, the wife of the patriarch Jacob, had her fourth child, she named him “Yehudah”, which means, “I am grateful,” to reflect her gratitude to God for the gift of another son. The name Yehudah is the source of the Hebrew name of the Jewish people (Yehudim), revealing the explicit tie between Judaism and gratitude.*

### **Activity**

Turn to a different person at your table and spend 6 minutes discussing what are ways Jews Judaism express gratitude.

### **What are ways Jews and Judaism express gratitude?**

**Brachot**-The antidote to entitlement

**Shehechyanu Moments**- birthdays, lost teeth, driver’s license, new baby

**Modeh/Modah ani**- This prayer is said upon waking to express gratitude for a new day. Add what you are specifically grateful for each morning, and what you are looking forward to doing.

**Text** - Rabbi Ben Zoma said, “Who is rich? The one who appreciates what they have.” Pirke Avot 4:1 What are all the things you are grateful for?

**Family Activity**- I am grateful for.... I can help others have this by...  
One action we can do as a family to help others have what we have is...

**Gratitude scrolls**- Write each item on a separate paper. Roll each one up like a scroll and place it in a glass. Read them: when you have had a rough day or need a lift to regain good feelings and turn your words into a series of blessings.

**Gratitude Journal**- set aside time daily or weekly to write or draw three things for which you are grateful

# Gemilut Hasadim

One unique feature of Judaism is the value concept called **Gemilut Hasadim – Acts of Loving Kindness**. This ancient value concept has been scientifically proven to promote thriving. Committing to do a few good gestures a day can increase your general level of contentment.

*“I have found that when people are told to try to do 3-5 acts of kindness a week, they get happier.” Lyubomirsky reports. “It does not have to be a grand gesture, given that women are already doing so much caregiving. In line at the store, let someone get ahead of you. Give a compliment. Smile at someone.” Or simply do something thoughtful for your significant other, she says: We did a study in which we asked someone to choose a person in her life to make her happier, like her husband, three times a week. It also made the giver significantly happier.”*

## Questions to Consider:

- What does it feel like to do acts of loving kindness?
- What are 3-5 thing you can do to make others feel valued?
- What is a nice thing that someone did that made you feel loved?
- What are some things you can do to help others feel this way?

## Gemilut Hasadim Challenge

### **3 Things I will do for myself?**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### **3 Things I will do for others in this conference:**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.