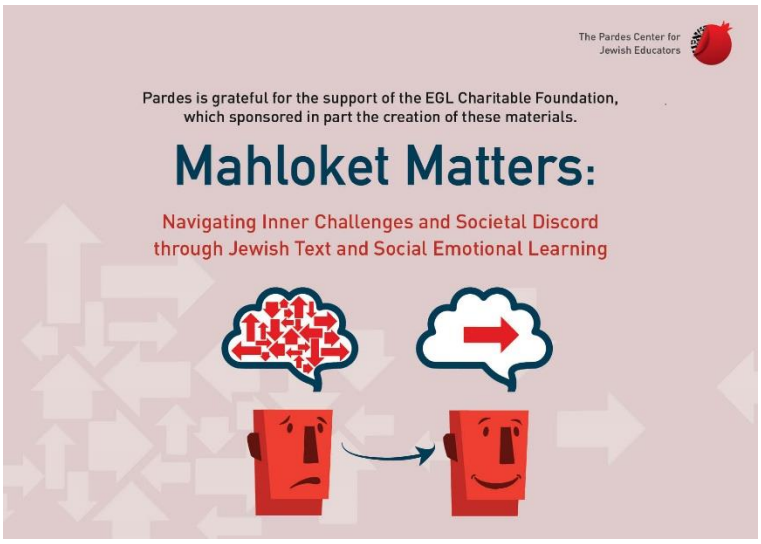


Welcome to Unit 3: " Constructive Communication."

Lesson 1: "The Art of Communication"

ACTIVITY: "Undivided Attention"

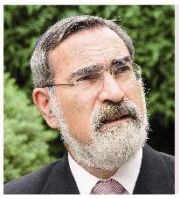
Instructions:

1. You are about to watch an amusing 2-minute video clip from a television show called "The Big Bang Theory" that demonstrates passive listening and active listening.
2. When watching the video, notice or write down the verbal and non-verbal **active listening** techniques used by the female character in the conversation.

Discussion Questions:

1. What makes Sheldon think that Amy is *not* really listening to him?
2. a) What does Amy *say* that indicates to Sheldon that she is listening to him?
   b) What does Amy *do* that indicates to Sheldon that she is listening to him?

Text Study – “The Art of Listening” by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
1948–2020

Text 3.1

"The Art of Listening"
Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks

Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing. *That is not to say there are no visual elements in Judaism. There are, but they are not primary. Listening is the sacred task. The most famous command in Judaism is Shema Yisrael, "Listen, Israel." What made Abraham, Moses and the prophets different from their contemporaries was that they heard the voice that to others was inaudible. In one of the great dramatic scenes of the Bible, God teaches Elijah that He is not in the whirlwind, the earthquake or the fire, but in the "still, small voice."*

It takes training, focus and the ability to create silence in the soul to learn how to listen, whether to God or to a fellow human being. *Seeing shows us the beauty of the created world, but listening connects us to the soul of another, and sometimes to the soul of the Other, God as He speaks to us, calls to us, summoning us to our task in the world.*

If I were asked how to find God, I would say, Learn to listen. Listen to the song of the universe in the call of birds, the rustle of trees, the crash and heave of the waves. Listen to the poetry of prayer, the music of the Psalms. ***Listen deeply to those you love and who love you.*** *Listen to the words of God in the Torah and hear them speak to you. Listen to the debates of the sages through the centuries as they tried to hear the texts' intimations and inflections.*

Don't worry about how you or others look. The world of appearances is a false world of masks, disguises and concealments. Listening is not easy. I confess I find it formidably hard. ***But listening alone bridges the abyss between soul and soul, self and other, I and the Divine.***

Jewish spirituality is the art of listening.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are some distinctions between listening and seeing that leads Rabbi Sacks to believe that “Judaism is a religion of listening, not seeing?”

2. Why does listening require “training, focus and the ability to create silence in the soul?” What makes listening so hard?

3. Rabbi Sacks claims that “listening alone bridges the abyss between soul and soul, self and other, I and the Divine.”
   a) Do you agree with that statement? Why or why not?
   b) Why might listening have that kind of connective power?
   c) Have you ever experienced an enhanced connection with someone else due to deep listening, either as the listener or the person being heard?
   d) Is there a relationship in your life that you wish involved better listening?

Text Study - Deuteronomy 6:4

Text 3.2

Deuteronomy 6:4

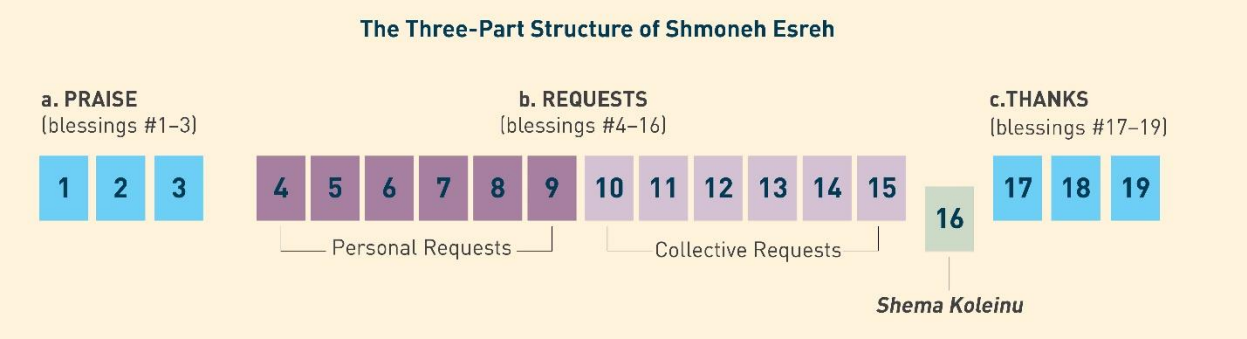
Listen, Israel: the LORD is our God, the LORD is One.

דברים ו:ד

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקֵינוּ ה׳ אֶחָד׃

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you interpret these 6 words? Why do you think it has become such a famous text in Jewish tradition?
2. What is unusual about this prayer?



Text Study – Shema Koleinu Prayer

Text 3.3

Shema Koleinu Prayer

Listen *to our voice, LORD our God.*

Spare us and have compassion on us,

and in compassion and favor accept our prayer, for You, God, **listen** *to prayers and please.*

Do not turn us away, O our King,

empty-handed from Your presence,

for You **listen** *with compassion*

to the prayer of Your people Israel.

Blessed are You, LORD, who **listens** *to prayer.*

תפילת שמע קולנו

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ ה׳ אֱלֹקֵינוּ
חוּס וְרַחֵם עָלֵינוּ
וְקַבֵּל בְּרַחֲמִים וּבְרָצוֹן אֶת־תְּפִלָּתֵנוּ
כִּי אֵל **שׁוֹמֵעַ** תְּפִלּוֹת וְתַחֲנוּנִים אָתָּה
וּמִלְּפָנֶיךָ מַלְכֵּנוּ רֵיקָם אַל־תְּשִׁיבֵנוּ

כִּי אַתָּה **שׁוֹמֵעַ** תְּפִלַּת עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּרַחֲמִים.
בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה׳ **שׁוֹמֵעַ** תְּפִלָּה׃

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the request in this prayer different than all of the other requests made in the middle section of *Shemoneh Esreh*?

2. What is the main theme of this prayer?

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקינוּ | **Listen, Israel:** the LORD is our God...

שְׁמַע קוֹלֵנוּ ה׳ אֱלֹקינוּ | **Listen** to **our voice**, LORD our God.

ACTIVITY: "The Power of Active Listening"

Instructions:
Please listen to an audio clip of a StoryCorps teacher Celeste Davis-Carr and her student, Aaron. Aaron shared with his teacher, Celeste, in a StoryCorps recording that he was homeless.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that it was powerful for Celeste to listen to Aaron and his story?

2. How did Celeste show Aaron that she was really listening to him?

3. Why do you think that it was important to Aaron that his teacher, Celeste, listened to him and his story? How do you know?

- **Active Listening** involves attentively seeking to understand a speaker's message, rather than passively hearing the words that a speaker says.
- **Active Listeners** provide verbal and nonverbal feedback to show their investment in what the speaker is sharing
- **Active Listening** can help to build trust within a conversation, thereby allowing the speaker to communicate more easily, openly, and honestly.

Activity: “Short Silences Listening Lab”

Instructions

1. You are going to do an exercise to practice active listening strategies, particularly using short silences and not interrupting.

2. Read the quote below by Diana Senechal, an author and former New York City public school teacher.

> “Listening…involves a certain surrender, a willingness to sit with what one does not already know…Listening requires us to stretch a little beyond what we know, expect or want.”
>
> DIANA SENECHAL
> (author and former New York City public school teacher)

3. Students are going to interview each other, using the following prompt:

Tell me something about yourself that might surprise me.

4. When you interview each other, you should practice using short silences. This means that whenever the narrator stops speaking, the interviewer should pause for six to eight seconds (counting quietly to themselves) before asking a follow-up question. During this period, the narrator is free to add any details to their story. The interviewer will then need to wait for another opportunity to ask a follow-up question.

5. You will work in pairs. Student A will tell their story for five minutes total, with Student B pausing before they ask any follow-up questions.

6. Students A and B will switch roles.

Discussion Questions:

1. As the interviewer, how did it feel to pause before asking questions?

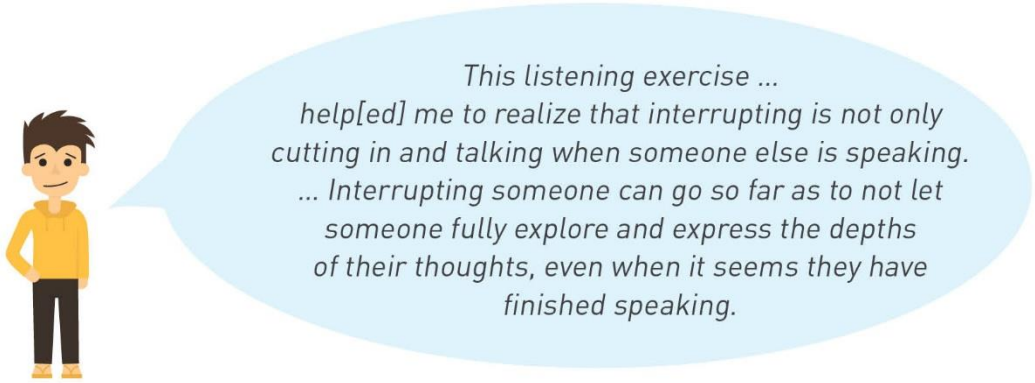
2. Were the pauses helpful when you were telling your story?

3. Do you think people often use this method of ‘short silences’ in real life?

4. What does it feel like when someone interrupts you?

5. What do you think might cause someone to interrupt another person?

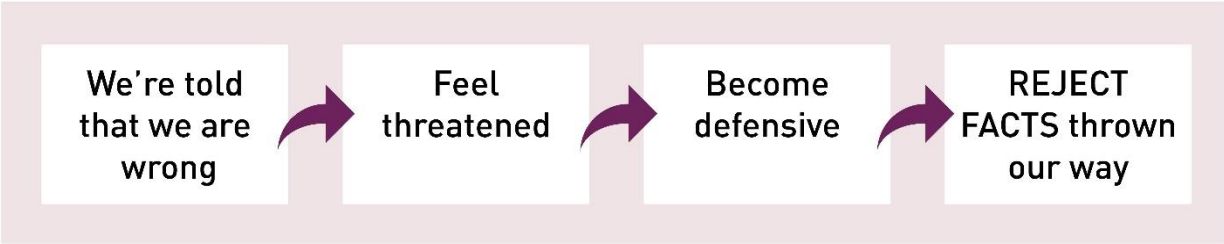
Addendum: The listening exercise you just performed was also used by graduate students. Read the following statement, written by one of those students:

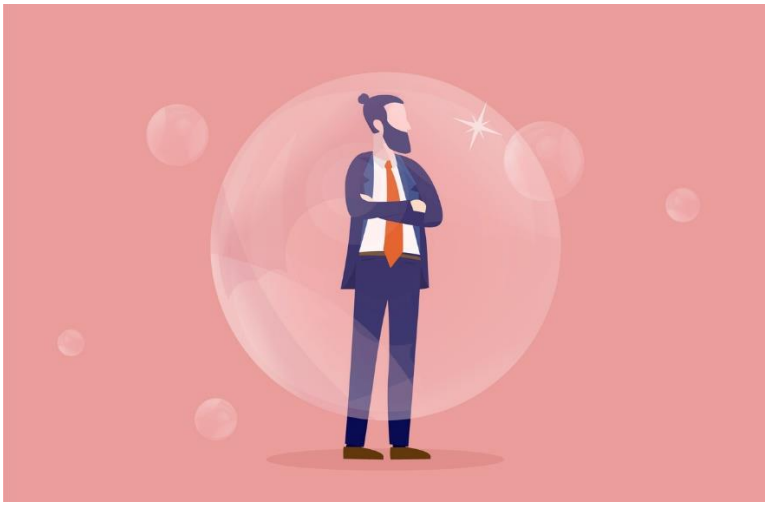


ACTIVITY: “Rapid Response”

Instructions

1. The class will be divided into 2 groups.
2. Each student in Group A should write down one sentence beginning with the words, “I think.” The statement should not be about anything serious, but it should be something you genuinely believe. For example, “I think that dogs make better pets than cats.”
3. Each student in Group A will share their statement with one student in Group B. (If there are an odd number of students in the class then two Group B students should work together.)
4. Each Group B student has 30 seconds to think (or write down) as many arguments AGAINST the assertion made by the Group A student. For example, the Group B student needs to think about and organize arguments as to why cats actually make better pets than dogs.
5. Each Group B student then has 30 seconds to **verbally** make their case and try to persuade the Group A student to change his/her mind.



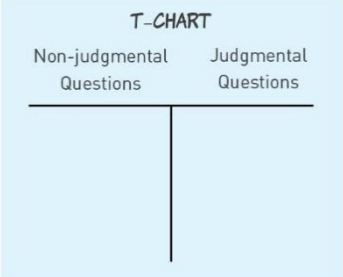


How can we respond to someone with whom we disagree in a way that does not make them defensive?

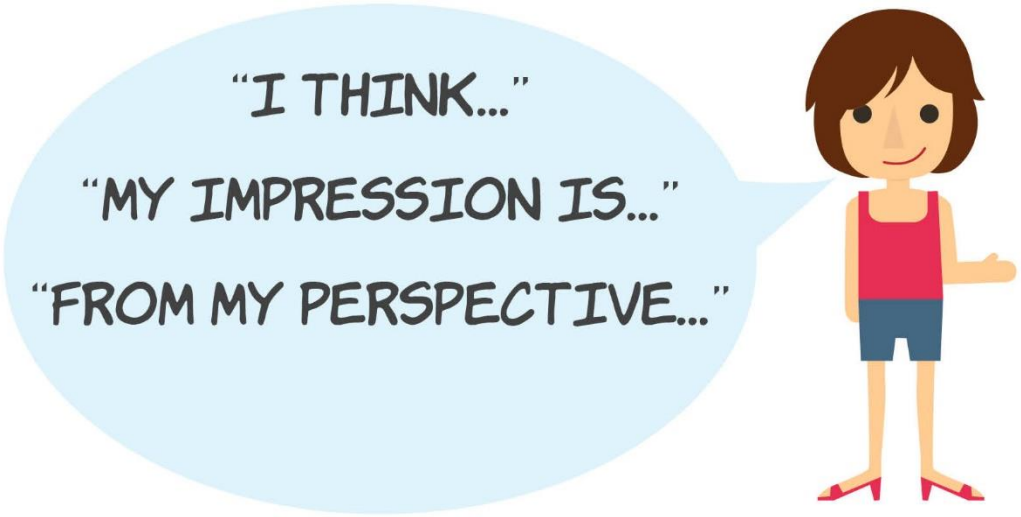
Step 1: Check In With Yourself
Step 2: Ask Questions For Understanding

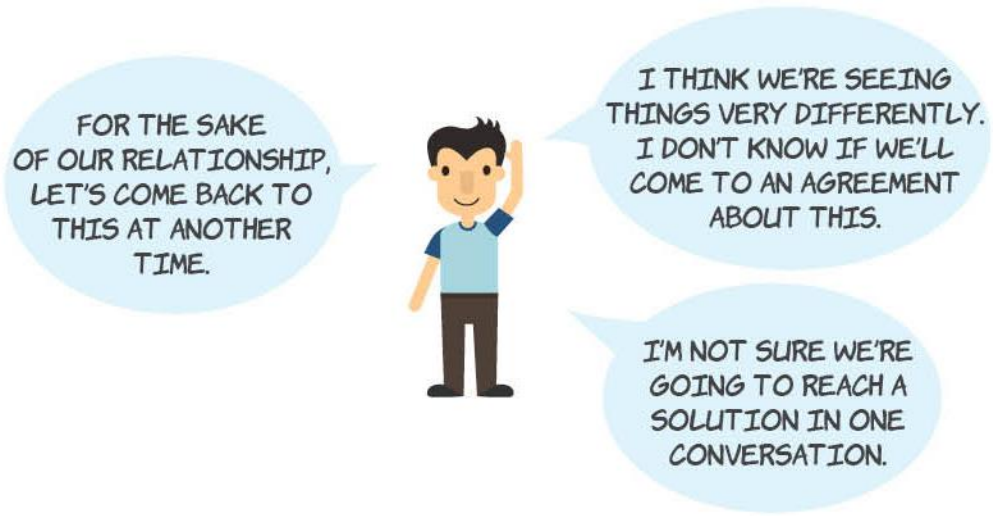
ACTIVITY: "Contrasting Questions"

Instructions:
1. Create a T-chart of "non-judgmental questions" versus "judgmental questions."
2. Write at least 3 examples in each category.



Step 3: Speak With Humility





Lesson 2: “The Sanhedrin Way”

How can the procedures of the ancient Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) model for us how to disagree constructively today?

Text Study:

Text 3.4

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:3

The Sanhedrin was (organized) like half a round granary, so that each (judge) could see each (judge).

משנה סנהדרין ד:ג

סַנְהֶדְרִין הָיְתָה כַּחֲצִי גֹּרֶן עֲגֻלָּה, כְּדֵי שֶׁיִּהוּ רוֹאִין זֶה אֶת זֶה.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did the members of the Sanhedrin sit in a semi-circle?

2. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?

Text 3.5

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:2

Capital cases begin from [the judges on] the side.

משנה סנהדרין ד:ב

דִּינֵי נְפָשׁוֹת מַתְחִילִין מִן הַצַּד.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you understand this text?
2. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?
3. To what extent have you ever felt intimidated when expressing your opinions? Or have you, even unintentionally, intimidated others when they were expressing their opinions?

Text 3.6

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 17a

Rav Kahana said: If the Sanhedrin unanimously finds [the accused] guilty, he is acquitted.

בבלי סנהדרין יז ע"א

אמַר רַב כָּהֲנָא: סַנְהֶדְרֵי שֶׁרָאוּ כּוּלָּן לְחוֹבָה - פּוֹטְרִין אוֹתוֹ.

Discussion Questions:

1. What should happen when all are of one opinion? Why?
2. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?
3. Do you agree with this guideline? Are you more confident that you have arrived at the right decision when everyone agrees or when people also disagree?

Text 3.7

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 17a

Rav Yehudah said in the name of Rav: None is to be given a seat on the Sanhedrin unless he is able to prove the cleanness of a reptile from Biblical texts.

בבלי סנהדרין יז ע"א

אמַר רַב יְהוּדָה אמַר רַב: אֵין מוֹשִׁיבִין בְּסַנְהֶדְרִין אֶלָּא מִי שֶׁיּוֹדֵעַ לְטַהֵר אֶת הַשֶּׁרֶץ מִן הַתּוֹרָה.

Discussion Questions:

1. What does it mean to “prove the cleanness of the reptile?”
2. Why should this be a qualification to sit on the Sanhedrin?
3. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?
4. When might it be a *weakness* to be able to argue both sides?
5. To what extent do you feel that you are able to argue both sides of an argument, especially when relating to ideas, values, and politics?

Activity: “Mock-Sanhedrin Exercise” - Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker?

Instructions

1. You are now members of the Sanhedrin!
2. A dilemma has come before you. You must decide whether to “Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker.”
3. Read the “Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker” scenario below.

Two months ago, a board member of the Orchard Institute of Jewish Studies and one of the largest single donors to Orchard asked his old friend, retired Senator Cregg McNeal, to come and speak to the Orchard student body next Tuesday about his recent book on how high-tech can bring peace to the Middle East.

Last week, a recent immigrant from a Muslim-majority country carried out a shooting attack in a school gymnasium in the former Senator’s home state resulting in the loss of human life. Within the hour, McNeal tweeted “barbarians and savages!” In a television interview, he called for supporting a travel ban that would include the attacker’s country of origin. In addition, he called for all Muslims in the US to fill out a questionnaire asking if they denounced a list of terror organizations and swore allegiance to the United States of America and its Constitution.

The responses came swiftly. Lawmakers across the aisle, and several civil rights organizations, as well as many Jewish organizations, harshly condemned his tweet as being racist and un-American, and referred to his suggestion of a questionnaire as a ‘loyalty oath,’ which they argued is unconstitutional and against the first amendment. A meme portraying former Senator McNeal with a poster of Senator Joseph McCarthy in the background reading “The New McNealizzm Starts Today!” went viral, being shared by millions on social media. McNeal responded in another television interview that his tweet was only referring to terrorists and not to all Muslims. In addition, he criticized the TV interviewer for “not focusing on the real victims of this story, the people who lost their lives and their families!”

The speaking event set to take place next week within Orchard has already been advertised on Facebook. As a result, numerous Orchard alumni have written comments and sent emails asking that the talk be canceled, as it would give his statements and proposals legitimacy and a platform. They believe that it is critical that Orchard, as a Jewish organization, express a clear moral voice that rejects such religious discrimination by rescinding the invitation. Yesterday afternoon, Orchard students started a petition to boycott the talk if it is not canceled. So far, a quarter of the student

body has signed the petition, and it is likely that this number will grow rapidly (even though there is a silent minority of students who privately expressed their desire, in conversations with staff and faculty members, not to cancel the talk).

The board member who invited him feels very disappointed and hurt by the reaction of the student body and strongly believes that the talk should not be canceled under any circumstance, as Orchard needs to be a place where all voices are heard. There is no institutional policy or precedent for how to proceed in such situations.

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4. Split into *batei midrash* (study houses) and *havrutot* (study pairs).
    - Within your *beit midrash* of 4, split into *havrutot* of 2 (referred to as 'advocacy pairs' in constructive controversy).
    - *Havruta* A should initially argue in favor of keeping the speaker, while *havruta* B should initially argue for canceling the speaker.
    - **Remember to use your constructive communication skills - active listening, ask questions for understanding, speak in the first-person, be aware of assumptions, etc.**
5. Prepare your argument
    - *Havruta* A prepares their argument in favor of keeping the speaker.
    - *Havruta* B prepares their argument in favor of canceling the speaker.
6. Engage in constructive controversy
    - Meeting back as a group of four, *havrutot* A and B engage in a respectful and rational disagreement attempting to convince the other of their logic for/against.
7. Switch – now prepare to argue the opposite side!
    - *Havruta* A prepares their argument in favor of canceling the speaker.
    - Havruta B prepares their argument in favor of keeping the speaker.
8. Engage again in constructive controversy
    - Meeting back again as a group of four, *havrutot* A and B engage in a respectful and rational disagreement attempting to convince the other of their logic for keeping/ canceling the speaker.

9. Prepare *beit midrash* proposal

- Each member of the *beit midrash* (group of four) now represents his/her own personal opinion and works collaboratively and persuasively with each other to develop a *beit midrash* proposal and reasoning that best addresses the conflicting needs and values.

- Each *beit midrash* writes down in a few lines the basic outline of their proposal/ reasoning on a flipchart and appoints a representative to present it to the whole Sanhedrin (the whole class).

- Feel free to add caveats to your "keep" or "cancel" decision. For example, "We propose to Keep the Speaker under the condition that he prefaces his presentation by saying that his views are his own and do not necessarily represent the views of the institution."

10. Present proposals

- All members of the Sanhedrin gather back into a semicircle.

- A representative of each *beit midrash* briefly presents their written proposal and reasoning to the rest of the Sanhedrin.

11. Vote!

- After hearing from all of the *batei midrash*, every individual votes to either "keep but..." or "cancel and …" the controversial speaker, just as the Sanhedrin would do after gathering back together.

- Note that the individual does NOT have to vote in accordance with the final proposal of his/her *beit midrash*.

- As each member votes, they have the option to share in a sentence why they are voting this way, and a comment about the experience of going through this process.

Lesson 3: “Harm Happens – How Do We Meet It?”

Reflection Questions:

1. When have you accidentally broken an agreement, or said or done something hurtful while in the midst of a difficult conversation that you later regretted?

2. Was there a time when someone else broke an agreement or said or did something in a way that was hurtful to you?

Text 3.8

Leviticus 19:17

You shall not hate your fellow in your heart
you shall surely reprove your friend
and you shall not miss the mark because of him.

ויקרא יט:יז

לֹא־תִשְׂנָא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בִּלְבָבֶךָ
הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עֲמִיתֶךָ
וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטְא׃

Discussion Questions:

1. This verse consists of three parts. What is the simple meaning for each part of the verse?

   - לֹא־תִשְׂנָא אֶת־אָחִיךָ בִּלְבָבֶךָ -
   - הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עֲמִיתֶךָ -
   - וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטְא -

2. What do you think the connection is between the three parts of the verse?
   Each part of the verse relies on the other. All three components are necessary.

3. Why do you think that the verse specifies not hating “אָחִיךָ בִּלְבָבֶךָ" (“your fellow in your heart”)?

4. The double language in the phrase הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ or “surely rebuke” emphasizes its importance. Why is offering *tochacha*, or constructive feedback, so important? How is it connected to the first instruction in the verse that “you shall not hate your fellow in your heart?”

5. What is likely to happen if you do NOT offer feedback to your friend when you have been wronged, and how might that cause you to somehow ‘miss the mark’?

Text 3.9

Babylonian Talmud, Arachin 16b

*It is taught in a baraita that Rabbi Tarfon says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who can **receive rebuke**. [Why?]*

[Because] if the one rebuking says to them: Remove the splinter from between your eyes, (i.e., rid yourself of a minor infraction)

The other says to them: "Remove the beam from between your eyes" (i.e., you have committed far more severe sins).

*Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria says: I would be surprised if there is anyone in this generation who knows **how to rebuke** correctly [without embarrassing the person they are rebuking].*

תלמוד בבלי, ערכין ט״ז ב

תניא א״ר טרפון: (תמיהני) אני אם יש בדור הזה **שמקבל תוכחה**.

אם אמר לו: טול קיסם מבין עיניך.

אמר לו: טול קורה מבין עיניך.

אמר רבי אלעזר בן עזריה תמיהני אם יש בדור הזה **שיודע להוכיח**.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that Rabbi Tarfon is doubtful that there is anyone in his generation who can *receive* critical feedback? Why is it so difficult to receive critical feedback?

2. In this example, Rabbi Tarfon says that when one rebukes another to say "Remove the splinter from between your eyes," the other might deflect that rebuke in an accusatory tone, saying, "Remove the beam from between your eyes" - implying that the first person committed a greater infraction. Why do people on the receiving end often deflect feedback or criticism?

3. Rabbi Azaria expresses doubt that there is anyone in his generation who can *give* feedback in a constructive way. What is challenging about offering constructive feedback?

Text 3.10

Rabbi Yehudah Lieb, the "Rebuker of Polonia," Hasidic commentary on Leviticus 19:17

One who wishes to rebuke must first of all check whether s/he has some hidden complaint, anger or compulsion regarding the one whom s/he is about to rebuke.

Only after it is clear to you that you do not hate your fellow in your heart are you permitted to rebuke.

ר׳ יהודה ליב, המוכיח מפולנאה

המוכיח צריך קודם כל לבדוק את עצמו אם אין לו טינא שבלב, רוגז, או הקפדה כלפי האיש שהוא עומד להוכיחו.

רק אם ברי לך שאינך שונא את אחיך בלבבך, רשאי אתה להוכיחו.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important to examine your heart *before* rebuking your friend? What might happen if you feel hatred towards your fellow as you are offering them feedback?

2. How does this instruction relate to what we learned in Unit 2 about formulating a clear intention before engaging in a difficult conversation?

Text 3.11

Orchot Tzadikim 12:10

Just as the angry person does not accept rebuke from others, so is s/he not able to administer rebuke to others...

If you rebuke your companion right at the beginning with an angry voice and with wrath, and you shame them, then you are sinning, for your companion will not receive correction from you.

For this is human nature: if someone comes to their companion with force, then their companion will be stubborn and unyielding to them, and will not listen to them. Concerning this, it says in Kohelet, "The words of the wise are heard gently" (Eccl. 9:17), that is to say, the wise person speaks gently.

אוחות צדיקים יב:י

כמו שאין הכעסן מקבל תוכחה מאחרים, כך אינו יכול להוכיח את אחרים...

אבל אם תוכיח את חברך מתחילה בקול רעש ובזעם ותבייש אותו, אז תקבל עליו חטא. ואותו חבר לא יקבל תוכחה ממך.

כי כן דרך בני אדם: כשאדם בא על חברו בחוזקה, אז חברו מתקשה כנגדו ולא ייכנע תחתיו. ועל זה אמר החכם (קהלת ט יז): "דברי חכמים בנחת נשמעים."

Discussion Questions:

1. According to the Orchot Tzadikim text, the tone of voice with which we offer feedback has a direct impact on how it might be received. He posits that if we approach someone with anger, they will be stubborn and unyielding. Why do you think this is so? Has this been true in your own experience?

2. This text connects the act of shaming someone with sinning. What might be the consequences of shaming the person to whom we are offering feedback?

3. Although our anger in a given situation may be justified, addressing someone with an angry tone is not generally an effective way to offer feedback. What practices might help us to recognize when we are in a state of anger, and prepare ourselves to offer feedback with a gentle tone, as the Orchot Tzadikim suggests?

Reflection Question:

Have you ever received feedback that was hard to hear in the moment, but ultimately was of great benefit? What was difficult about receiving it, and how did it benefit you?

ACTIVITY: "Feedback Frenzy"

Instructions:
1. Read the scenario in the box below:

Danny and Julien are partners on a semester-long school project. Although they collaborated well for the first couple of months, Danny has started to notice that Julien has been lagging behind on deadlines, slow to answer emails about the project, and seems like he isn't prioritizing it as much as he was in the beginning. Last weekend, Julien told Danny that he wouldn't be able to meet to work on the project because he was too busy with other school work, but Danny heard from another friend that Julien was out quite late Saturday night at a movie. He is starting to feel resentful that Julien isn't doing his part, and would like to speak with him about it.

2. Demonstrate the impact of giving and receiving feedback well or poorly, in the context of the hypothetical scenario that you just read.

3. Act out three different scenarios:

- Scene 1: Student A gives feedback unskillfully, without compassion. Student B also receives it poorly.
- Scene 2: Student A gives feedback compassionately and effectively, but Student B receives it poorly.
- Scene 3: Student A gives feedback compassionately and effectively, and Student B is receptive.

4. Your Observations-

- Scene 1: What was so ineffective about the way the feedback was given and received?
- Scene 2: What was skillful about the way the feedback was given? What was not skillful about the way the feedback was received?
- Scene 3: What was skillful about the way the feedback was given and received?

ACTIVITY: "Tips for *Tochacha*"

Instructions:
1. Write down or share with the class your suggested guidelines for giving and receiving feedback constructively.

"Calling Out vs. Calling In"

"I do get a sense sometimes now among certain young people ... that the way of me making change is to be as judgmental as possible about other people and that's enough. That's not activism. That's not bringing about change. If all you're doing is casting stones, you're probably not gonna get that far. That's easy to do."

BARACK OBAMA

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the difference between calling someone out, and calling them in? When are call-outs necessary, and when is “calling in” a more appropriate or compassionate choice?

2. Have you ever called someone out, or been called out publicly, for a harmful behavior? Did you feel that it was justified? What did you learn from that experience?

3. It is important to acknowledge the complexity and sensitivity in our current social and political reality. How can we strive to hold ourselves to high standards so that we don’t hurt others due to our blind spots, without shaming ourselves or others when we fall short of those high standards?

4. Considering the guidelines we previously created for giving and receiving *tochacha*, what might be some tips for how to “call in” others within our classroom community, rather than calling them out?

Lesson 4: “Coming Full Circle”

Text 3.12

Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 31a

Another time a non-Jew came before Shammai. He said, "I will convert if you can teach me the entire Torah while I stand on one foot." He [Shammai] pushed the non-Jew aside with the ruler that was in his hand.

The non-Jew came before Hillel and Hillel converted him. He [Hillel] said, "What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the entire Torah, the rest is just commentary, now go and study."

תלמוד בבלי, שבת ל״א א

שוב מעשה בגוי אחד שבא לפני שמאי .אמר לו, ״גיירני על מנת שתלמדני כל התורה כולה כשאני עומד על רגל אחת.״ דחפו באמת הבנין שבידו.

בא לפני הלל גייריה. אמר לו, ״דעלך סני לחברך, לא תעביד. זו היא כל התורה כולה ואידך פירושה הוא זיל גמור.״

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think that Shammai was not willing to engage with this person?

2. How do you understand Hillel’s response?

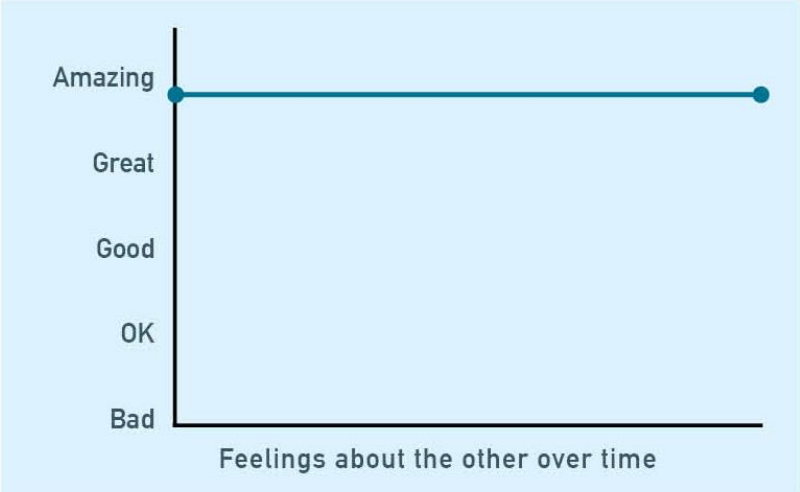
3. Bearing in mind all that we have learned, why do you think that Hillel is making a connection between the way you act towards yourself, and the way you act towards another?

Discussion Questions about the Video: “Connection Before Solution”

1. Have you ever assumed something about someone else that turned out not to be true?

2. Have you had an experience of sharing or receiving a story that either transformed how you perceived another person or how they perceived you?

3. How can we cultivate connection with others? For example:
   - With family members?
   - With peers?
   - With teachers?
   - With groups of people who hold different ideologies than us?


Amazing
Great
Good
OK
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Feelings about the other over time

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Text 3.13

Deuteronomy 6:17–18

17) Be sure to keep the commandments, decrees, and laws that the Lord your God has enjoined upon you.

18) Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord, that it may go well with you and that you may be able to possess the good land that the Lord your God promised on oath to your fathers.

דברים ו:יז-יח

יז) שָׁמוֹר תִּשְׁמְרוּן אֶת־מִצְוֹת ה׳ אֱלֹהֵיכֶם וְעֵדֹתָיו וְחֻקָּיו אֲשֶׁר צִוָּךְ׃

יח) וְעָשִׂיתָ הַיָּשָׁר וְהַטּוֹב בְּעֵינֵי ה׳ לְמַעַן יִיטַב לָךְ וּבָאתָ וְיָרַשְׁתָּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַטֹּבָה אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּע ה׳ לַאֲבֹתֶיךָ׃

Discussion Question:

1. In Deuteronomy 6:17, we are told to keep God's commandments. In the verse that immediately follows, we are directed to "do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord." What do you think is the distinction between the instructions in these verses?

Text 3.14

Nachmanides Deuteronomy 6:18

Our Rabbis have a beautiful Midrash on this verse. They have said [That which is right and good] refers to a compromise and going beyond the requirement of the letter of the law. The intent of this is as follows: At first he [Moses] states that you are to keep His statutes and His testimonies which He commanded you (Deuteronomy 6:17), and now he is stating that even where He has not commanded you, give thought, as well, to do what is good and right in His eyes, for He loves the good and the right.

Now this is a great principle, for it is impossible to mention in the Torah all the aspects of man's conduct with his neighbors and friends, and all his various transactions, and the ordinances of all societies and countries.

But since He mentioned many of them... he reverted to state in a general way that, in all matters, one should do what is good and right, including even compromise and, going beyond the requirements of the law...

רמב"ן דברים ו:יח

...ולרבותינו בזה מדרש יפה. אמרו: זו פשרה ולפנים משורת הדין. והכוונה בזה כי מתחלה אמר שתשמור חקותיו ועדותיו אשר צוך (דברים ו:י"ז), ועתה יאמר גם באשר לא צוך תן דעתך לעשות הטוב והישר בעיניו, כי הוא אוהב הטוב והישר.

וזה ענין גדול לפי שאי אפשר להזכיר בתורה כל הנהגות האדם עם שכניו ורעיו, וכל משאו ומתנו ותקוני הישוב והמדינות כלם.

אבל אחרי שהזכיר מהם הרבה... חזר לומר בדרך כלל שיעשה הטוב והישר בכל דבר, עד שיכנס בזה הפשרה ולפנים משורת הדין...

Discussion Questions:

1. According to Nachmanides, what are we meant to learn from the words, “Do what is right and good in the sight of the Lord?”

2. Have you experienced a conflict where finding some middle ground led to a beneficial outcome?

3. Are there certain challenges where you believe you would be unable or unwilling to compromise? Why?

4. Are there certain situations where you think compromise is the wrong course of action? Why?

ACTIVITY: “Living the Questions”

“Have patience with everything unresolved in your heart and try to love the questions themselves as if they were locked rooms or books written in a very foreign language. Don't search for the answers, which could not be given to you now, because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps then, someday far in the future, you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”

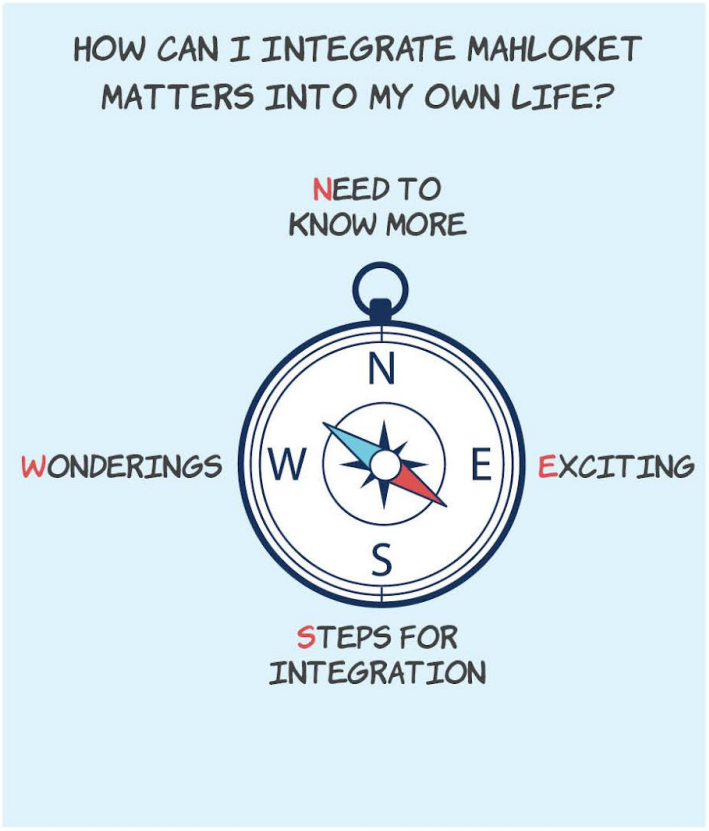
Rainer Maria Rilke, in "Letters to a Young Poet"

ACTIVITY: “Compass Points”

Instructions:

1. Consider the following question: **How can I integrate Mahloket Matters into my own life?**

2. Write your responses to that question based on the compass point prompts below:



N = NEED TO KNOW MORE
What Mahloket Matters concept, skill, etc. do you need to know more about in order to integrate it into your life?

E = EXCITING
What particular Mahloket Matters concept, skill, etc. are you excited to integrate into your life and why?

S = STEPS FOR INTEGRATION INTO MY LIFE
What steps will you take to integrate a Mahloket Matters concept, skill, etc. into your life?

W = WONDERINGS
What are you wondering about concerning integrating Mahloket Matters into your life?