



Facilitator's Guide: Activity 1

A Memorable Jewish Learning Experience

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Usage

This exercise helps people learn more about each other and uncovers the characteristics of memorable Jewish learning.

Grouping of Participants

The ideal group for such an exercise is 10 to 15. A smaller group may not be sufficiently diverse, while the stories of a larger group could get repetitive and boring. This means that a large Task Force will need to be divided into smaller groups. Time should be allotted at the end for someone from each group to report briefly on the similarities and differences they heard in their discussions.

Time Required

Allow 2 minutes for each participant, 15-20 minutes for summary discussion. Total allotted time is 45 minutes.

Materials

Flipchart and markers

Facilitation

1. Within the group, have each person spend no more than 2 minutes sharing with the others a memorable Jewish learning experience. They should tell something about the context, what the experience was, and the reason they think it is memorable. As each person speaks, someone should keep a running list on flipchart paper of 2-3 word descriptions of each experience.
2. Post the list of experiences for the entire Task Force to see. Then ask, "Looking at all these experiences, what characteristics do you think made these experiences particularly memorable? Comments will include features like: experienced with family, experienced with peers, away from home. Have someone keep a running list of these characteristics on flip chart paper in front of the group.
3. As participants look at the posted lists, pose the following questions in order:
 - Looking over these lists, what seem to be the big ideas that pop out? Are there any themes or threads? If so, what are they?
 - What does this tell us about the situations and circumstances that have the greatest impact on our lives and shape who we are as Jews?

- What if education in our congregation purposely set out to create these kinds of experiences with these kinds of characteristics? How would the results be different? What might be the impact on the children? On their parents? On our congregation?
 - What would we have to do differently in order to make these types of experiences the norm in our congregation?
4. To sum up, ask: In what ways has this discussion been different from how you typically talk about children's learning?
 5. Wrap-up up by mentioning that this list of characteristics and the comments about what children's Jewish education could be like will be placed in a Vision Folder. Over the course of the project other notes from discussions, exercises and text studies will be added so that when it is time to write a vision for children's Jewish learning in your congregation you will have a written record of your Task Force's deliberations.

Record Keeping

The list of characteristics, the impacts they would have on the congregation, and the notes from the discussion of what the congregation would have to do differently should be filed in the Vision Folder.