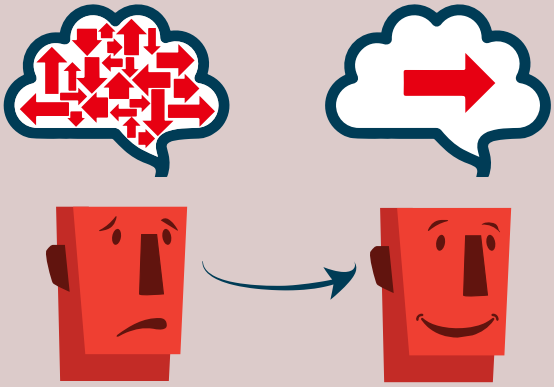

The Pardes Center for Jewish Educators

Mahloket Matters:

Navigating Inner Challenges and Societal Discord through Jewish Text and Social Emotional Learning

Pardes is grateful for the support of the EGL Charitable Foundation, which sponsored in part the creation of these materials.

Overview: Unit 3 - Constructive Conversations

We have established that there are particular internal, interpersonal, and external conditions that are necessary in order to set the stage for a difficult conversation to be productive and beneficial. Once those conditions have been met, it is time to actually engage in the conversation. Unit 3 focuses on important practical skills to help our students **bravely and skillfully engage in difficult conversations**.

Each skill falls within one or more of the five core social emotional learning competencies represented in the graphic below (see slide #1). Click here for a more detailed breakdown of each core competency as explained by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Collaborative (CASEL).

Unit 3 Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn how to listen deeply and speak with humility.
- Students will practice engaging in constructive disagreement using a mock-Sanhedrin exercise.
- Students will recognize the importance and challenges of offering and receiving *tochacha* (constructive feedback).
- Students will understand that while not every conflict can be resolved, there is still great value and growth through engaging in the process of *mahloket*.

Duration:

There are 4 lessons in this unit. Depending on how much time you choose to spend on the discussion or activities, each lesson is approximately 50–75 minutes long. You may decide to split one lesson into multiple sessions, especially if you are facilitating distance learning.

Curriculum Writers:

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Enduring Understandings:

- Constructive communication includes active listening, questions for understanding, and speaking with humility.
- The ancient Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) intentionally operated in a manner that encouraged constructive disagreement.
- No matter how careful we are to properly set the stage for a difficult conversation, some conversations may result in hurt feelings.
- There are strategies that can help repair the harm done to some relationships.

Essential Questions:

- What are some of the crucial skills necessary for engaging productively in a difficult conversation? (lesson 1)
- How can the procedures of the ancient Sanhedrin (Jewish high court) model for us how to disagree constructively today? (lesson 2)
- How can we constructively communicate with someone with whom we are upset in ways that will both address the issue and not hurt the relationship? (lesson 3)
- How does the power of human connection factor into constructive communication? (lesson 4)

Lesson 1

The Art of Listening

Key vocabulary and concepts in lesson 1:

(see slide #2)

- Active Listening
- Passive Listening
- Shema Yisrael
- Shema Koleinu
- Backfire Effect
- Non-judgmental Questions
- Judgmental Questions
- Speak With Humility

This lesson teaches skills associated with the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making.

Click here for details about each competency.

Listening is a crucial component of effective communication. There are two main categories of listening: passive listening and active listening. **Passive listening** means listening without reacting. **Active listening** includes listening and reacting, either verbally, non-verbally, or both.

The following activity is intended to demonstrate the distinction between active listening and passive listening.

Activity: "Undivided Attention"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #3; student materials p.1
- Pen and paper (optional)

Instructions:

1. Tell students that they are about to watch an amusing 2-minute video clip (slide #3) from a television show called "The Big Bang Theory" that demonstrates passive listening and active listening.
2. Instruct students to note (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?

Note to Educator:

Amy listens *passively* until she tells Sheldon that he has her "undivided attention" (at the 50-second mark in the video). From that point forward, she engages in *active* listening. Here are some of the specific examples of passive and active listening that you may want to discuss with your students (see slide # 4):

Passive Listening	Active Listening
• *no eye contact* • *no acknowledgment of what the other person has said* • *asks question unrelated to what the other person has said*	1. ***Non-verbal*** • *eye contact* • *hand gestures* • *voice modulation* 2. ***Verbal*** • *uses "door opener" phrases that show interest and keep the other person talking* • *asks follow-up questions*

Why is listening such an important skill?

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks (see slide #5), the renowned former Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom, believed that listening is the key to creating a relationship with God and with other human beings. Let's examine an excerpt from "The Art of Listening," an article written by Rabbi Sacks on Parshat Bereishit.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks
1948–2020

Providing a copy of the text below, the educator can choose to lead the following text study with the whole class or divide the students into *hevrutot* (learning partners) in person or in Zoom breakout rooms.

Text 3.1 (see slide #6; student materials p.2)

"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 lead Rabbi Sacks to claim 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?

   We've got a "blind spot" in our brains that tends to create a lot of interference when listening to others. That blind spot filters what we hear and distorts it with *our own* needs, experiences, and biases so that we often hear what others say without understanding what they mean. It takes training and practice to quiet the noise in our own heads and souls in order to truly hear what the other person is saying in their own terms and not ours.

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?

What is the appropriate relationship between listening and speaking?

Rabbi Sacks cites two prayers and the order in which we say them as evidence for the appropriate relationship between listening and speaking. The first prayer is the Shema, which has been part of the Jewish liturgy since Temple times and is recited in the evening and in the morning. The prayer opens with the verse from Deuteronomy 6:4.

Providing a copy of the text below, the educator can choose to lead the following text study with the whole class or divide the students into *hevrutot* (learning partners) in person or in Zoom breakout rooms.

Text 3.2 (see slide #7; student materials p.3)

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 the Jewish tradition?
2. What is unusual about this prayer?

    Rabbi Sacks makes the following points about Shema in his commentary in the Koren *siddur* (prayer book):

    "The Shema contains no human requests, no praise, no plea. It is a set of Biblical readings. It is less a prayer than a prelude to prayer. In prayer, we speak to God. In the Shema, God, through the Torah, speaks to us. The word Shema itself means "listen," and the recital of the Shema is a supreme act of faith-as-listening: to the voice that brought the universe into being, created us in love and guides us through our lives."

    In other words, the Shema testifies to the fact that we listen to God when God talks to us. **Through listening, we let God know that we are paying attention and that we care about what God has to say**.

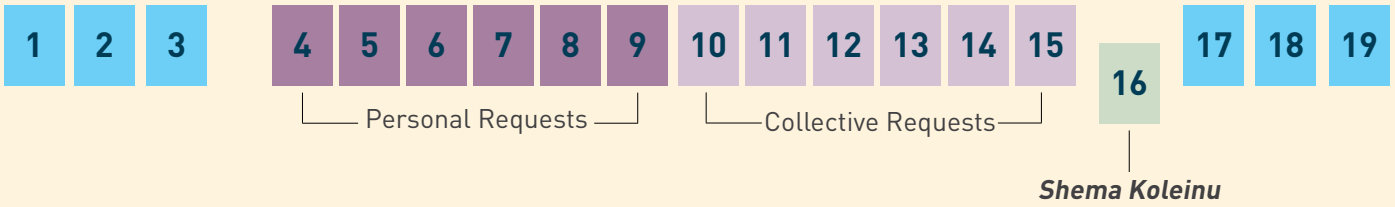
Note to Educator:

The background information below concerning the Amida prayer is based on Rabbi Jonathan Sacks's commentary found in the Koren *siddur* (prayer book).

Almost immediately following the Shema in the morning and evening prayer services, we arrive at the central prayer in the service known as the Amida ("standing"). The entire prayer is said standing to reflect that we are in the presence of God. According to tradition, the earliest version of the Amida dates back to the Great Assembly in Jerusalem in the 4th Century B.C.E. It was canonized in a fuller form by Shimon HaPakuli in the days of Rabban Gamliel II.

Another name for this central prayer is Shemoneh Esreh ("eighteen"), because it originally consisted of eighteen blessings. However, a nineteenth blessing was added later. The Shemoneh Esreh has a three-part structure (see slide #8; student materials p.3):

The Three-Part Structure of Shmoneh Esreh



a. PRAISE (blessings #1–3)

b. REQUESTS (blessings #4–16): This section includes six blessings for personal requests and six blessings for collective requests. **The final blessing (#16)** in this section does NOT fit the structure of the previous request blessings.

c. THANKS (blessings #17–19)

What is the final prayer in the request section of the Amida that does not fit with the other requests in the same section? What makes it unique?

Providing a copy of the text below, the educator can choose to lead the following text study with the whole class or divide the students into *hevrutot* (learning partners) in person or in Zoom breakout rooms.

Text 3.3 (see slide#9; student materials pp.3–4)

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 pleas.*

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?

   The previous twelve blessings in this section relate to personal requests and national requests, both spiritual and physical. But this blessing does not ask for the fulfillment of any specific wish or action. Instead, it is a prayer about prayer itself!

2. What is the main theme of this prayer?

   The Hebrew root word ש.מ.ע (listen) appears four times in this brief prayer. This is an "all-inclusive" prayer or a "meta-prayer." It is a prayer in which we ask God to please LISTEN to our prayers. In fact, this is the one spot in the fixed text of the Amida where there is space for the individual to include any of their personal requests in their own words.

Now that we have examined the prayers of Shema and Shema Koleinu, we can better understand the **ideal relationship between listening and speaking** as modeled for us in the *siddur* (prayer book). The order and juxtaposition of these two prayers is intentional and instructive. Let's take a look at the opening line of the prayers side-by-side (see slide #10; student materials p.4):

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה׳ אֱלֹקֵינוּ | **Listen**, **Israel:** the LORD is our God…

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

First we declare that we are listening to God. And only once we have made that declaration about listening to God do we then ask God to reciprocate. **We state that we have listened to You, God (Shema), and now we ask that You listen to us (Shema Koleinu).**

This lesson about listening does not apply exclusively to the relationship between humans and the Divine. It applies to the relationships between human beings as well. To really "bridge the abyss between soul and soul," we need to first do the hard work of active listening. We need to listen with the intent to discover what is going on inside of the other person and to understand where they are coming from.

Like most skills, we become better at active listening the more we practice it. The following activity is intended to give students an opportunity to cultivate their active listening skills and to recognize the power of active listening.

Note to Educator:

We selected the following two activities from an "active listening" lesson plan found on the StoryCorps website. Feel free to facilitate one or both of these activities for your students.

Activity: "The Power of Active Listening"

Materials:

- Audio recording of Celeste Davis-Carr and Aaron (slide #11; student materials p.4)
- Headphones (optional)
- Interview transcript (optional)

Instructions:

1. Explain to students that this activity explores the power of listening to others, as well as how empowering it feels when others truly listen to us.
2. Tell students that they are going to begin this exploration by hearing an audio clip of a StoryCorps teacher named Celeste Davis-Carr, and her student, Aaron. In a StoryCorps recording, Aaron shared with Celeste that he was homeless. The recording that you will listen to now was their follow-up interview.
3. Click here to play the Celeste Davis-Carr & Aaron Audio Clip for your students (see slide #11).
4. Ask a volunteer to summarize the clip.

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?

Note to Educator:

At the conclusion of the discussion questions, you may want to introduce an expanded definition of active listening from StoryCorps (see slide #12; student materials p.4).

- **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"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #13; student materials pp.5–6
- Pen/paper (optional)
- Recording device such as Voicethread (optional)

Instructions:

1. Tell students that they are now going to try an exercise to practice active listening strategies, particularly using short silences and not interrupting.
2. Ask students to read the quote by Diana Senechal, an author and former New York City public school teacher (see slide #13; student materials p.5).

> "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. Ask for a volunteer to explain what it means to really listen, according to Senechal. Ask if anyone would like to add to this answer. Some sample responses may include:
    - "To understand someone who is different from us, we need to try to see things from his or her perspective."
    - "We have to put aside what we think we know to really listen."
4. Explain that students are going to interview each other, using the following prompt:

    Tell me something about yourself that might surprise me.
5. Consider whether you want to suggest that the interviewer take notes during the interview or that the interviews be recorded.
6. Explain that when students interview each other, they 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.
7. Pair students up by counting off. If there are an uneven number of students, the educator may participate.
8. Student A will tell their story for five minutes total, with Student B pausing before asking any follow-up questions.
9. After you call time, 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 to this activity from StoryCorps (optional):

Explain to students that the listening exercise that they just performed was also used by graduate students (i.e.,people who have graduated from college and are studying for a master's degree). Read the following statement, written by one of those students (see slide #14; student materials p.6):

This listening exercise ... help[ed] me to realize that interrupting is not only cutting in and talking when someone else is speaking. ... Interrupting someone can go so far as to not let someone fully explore and express the depths of their thoughts, even when it seems they have finished speaking.

Ask students to raise their hands if, after completing the exercise themselves, they agree with this quote. Call on a few volunteers to explain why they do or do not agree.

Note to Educator:

Many of the ideas and suggestions in the remainder of this unit are based on the free online exercise called "OpenMind: An Interactive Guide to Navigating Difficult Conversations." The OpenMind website, co-founded by Dr. Jonathan Haidt, is a "nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that builds psychology-based tools to help people communicate more constructively across differences." It is a wonderful resource that you and/or your students may enjoy exploring.

Just as the way that we listen majorly impacts the effectiveness level of communication, so too does the way that we SPEAK.

Activity: "Rapid Response"

Materials:

- Pen and paper (optional)
- Student materials p.6

Instructions:

1. Divide your students into 2 halves.
2. Instruct each student in Group A to write down one sentence beginning with the words, "I think." The statement should not be about anything serious, but it should reflect something that they genuinely believe. For example, "I think that dogs make better pets than cats."

3. Each student in Group A should 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 as possible **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.
6. Bring the whole class back together. Ask several Group A students whether their Group B counterparts successfully convinced them to change their minds. Why or why not?

Takeaway:

It is likely that, despite their best efforts, the Group B students failed to convince the Group A students to change their minds. **That is because rapid fact-throwing rarely convinces anyone of anything**.

Let's take a case that is much more sensitive or personal than whether cats or dogs make better pets. Imagine that someone makes the statement, "Global warming is a hoax." If you strongly disagree with that statement, your instinct will likely be to throw out a whole bunch of facts that refute the claim that global warming is a hoax.

Most people share that same impulse to respond with a lot of facts when confronted with a perspective with which they disagree. That is based on the assumption that laying out all of the facts in a clear and logical manner will cause someone to recognize the error of their ways and change their minds. But that strategy rarely works, especially when the topic at hand is emotionally charged. Why?

When we are told that we are wrong about something that we care deeply about, it often sets off the following chain reaction (see slide #15; student materials p.7):

We're told that we are wrong → **Feel threatened** → **Become defensive** → **REJECT FACTS thrown our way**

People tend to dig in and to create a force field around themselves when they feel that their beliefs are being threatened (see slide #16; student materials p.7). They will defend their beliefs at all costs. And they will not allow a whole slew of facts to penetrate that force field. In fact, throwing out a whole bunch of facts to prove that they are wrong will probably cause them to defend their original position even more firmly. This is what psychologists call the **backfire effect**.

Note to Educator:

This is a good opportunity to personalize the concept of creating a protective "force field" around ourselves when we feel vulnerable. You may want to ask your students if they would like to share a situation in which they created a force field around themselves upon feeling threatened in some way. Were they aware in that moment that they had created the force field? What made them feel defensive in that particular situation?

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

As we discussed in unit 2, you need to determine whether you are ready to have this conversation now. Remember the skills that you learned in the previous unit:

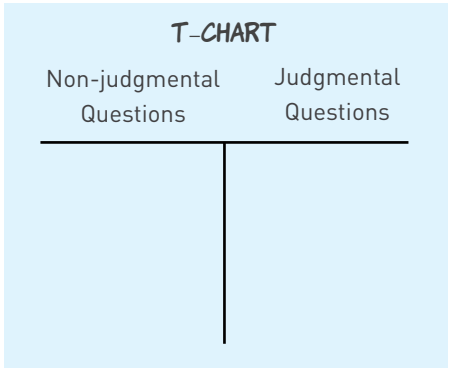
- Pause.
- Take 5–10 mindful breaths.
- Pay attention to the signals that your body is sending you. Is your elephant or your rider at the reins?

Then decide whether you want to move forward with this conversation at this time.

Step 2: Ask Questions for Understanding

A question that reflects an interest in understanding what the other person has to say "invites people to open up instead of shutting them down" (OpenMind). These kinds of questions are called **non-judgmental questions**. They gradually cause people to lower their defenses as they begin to trust that you are seeking to *understand them* rather than to mock, condemn, or disregard them. In contrast, **judgmental questions** make people feel like they are under attack so their defenses shoot way up.

Activity: "Contrasting Questions"



Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #17; student materials p.7
- Pen/paper

Instructions:

1. Instruct your students to create a T-chart of "non-judgmental questions" versus "judgmental questions (see slide #17; student materials p.7).
2. Students should come up with at least 3 examples for each question category.
3. Ask several students to explain why their questions belong in either the non-judgmental or judgmental categories.

Note to Educator:

Here are some examples of non-judgmental and judgmental questions (see slide #18):

Non-judgmental Questions	Judgmental Questions
• What does that mean for you?	• How could you think it means that?
• What's your take on...?	• That's your take?
• What's the best thing about...?	• How could you think that is a good thing?

Asking non-judgmental questions will not only help you to better hear the other person, it also makes the other person *more likely to hear you* when you speak.

Since you took the time and interest to truly hear them out, they will likely be in a much more open frame of mind to hear your perspective when it is your turn to talk.

You may want to explicitly inquire about their willingness to hear you out by first acknowledging your differences and then following up with another non-threatening question. For example, "I think we might see things differently. Are you open to talking about this more?"

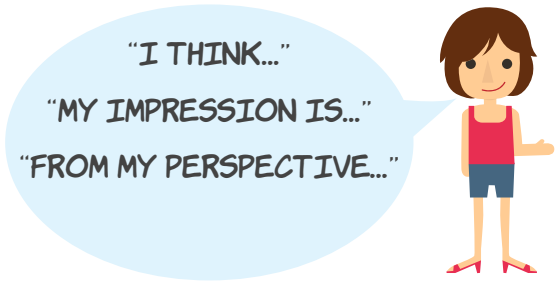
As Rabbi Sacks taught us, listening can be exceptionally difficult. But the use of non-judgmental questions creates the kind of deep listening opportunities that have the power to "connect us to the soul of another."

Step 3: Speak With Humility

Sometimes we assume that the more brashly we speak, the more convincing we will be. That strategy may endear us to those people who already agree with us. But it is an *ineffective strategy* for winning over people who *disagree* with us. Insisting that others are wrong or calling them stupid for their beliefs just causes people to shut down and retreat into their own force fields.

People will actually be far more receptive to what we have to say if we speak with humility. We can be confident, but we should avoid coming across as *overconfident* because that typically turns people off, especially when we are challenging their views.

A simple way to speak with humility is to **speak in the first person**. For example (see slide #19; student materials p.8):

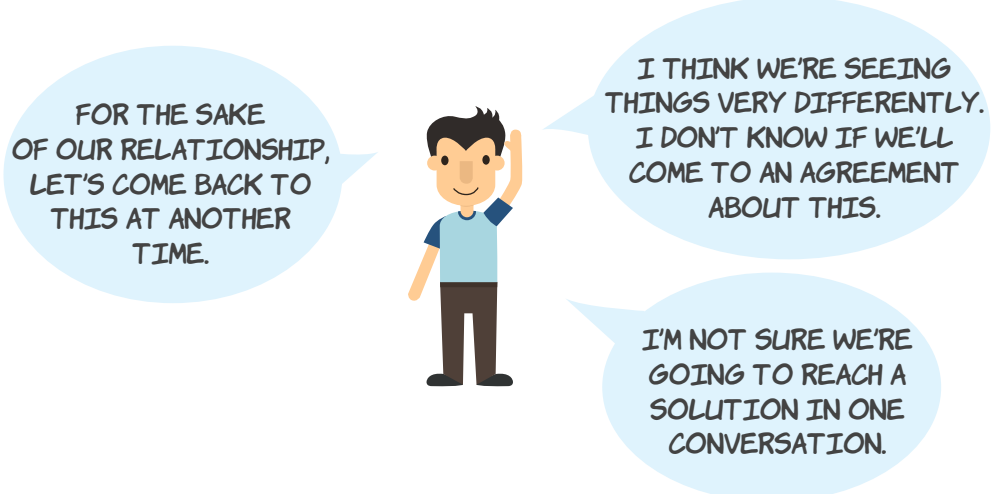


What is the advantage of speaking in the first person?

- It acknowledges that we are only able to speak from our own experience and perspective.
- It helps us to avoid accusatory language and assuming what the other person is/was doing or is/was thinking.
- "[It]... invites the other person to see things in a new light, instead of demanding that they change their mind" (OpenMind).

However, despite our best efforts to speak with humility and non-judgmentally, sometimes the other person still may not hear you out. In that case, you might decide that you no longer want to stay in this conversation. What might you say to gracefully exit the conversation without inflaming tensions?

After eliciting some ideas from your students, here are a few exit strategy statements suggested by OpenMind (see slide #20; student materials pp. 8–9):



Discussion Questions:

1. What might be useful about these exit strategy statements?
2. What might be challenging about these exit strategy statements?
3. Can you think of other exit strategy statements that would be useful?
4. Are there particular exit strategy statements that you think would work better with some people than others? Why?

Lesson 2 "The Sanhedrin Way"

Key vocabulary and concepts in lesson 2:

(see slide #21)

- Sanhedrin
- 4 Sanhedrin Guidelines to Promote Constructive Disagreement
- Groupthink

This lesson teaches skills associated with the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making.

Click here for details about each competency.

In this lesson, your students will have the opportunity to practice active listening, speaking with humility, and engaging in constructive disagreement through an interactive mock-Sanhedrin exercise.

Note to Educator:

Read the quote below for more background information about the Sanhedrin (see slide #22):

Eliezer Schnall, Michael J. Greenberg, "Groupthink and the Sanhedrin: An analysis of the ancient court of Israel through the lens of modern social psychology" in Journal of Management History, vol. 18, issue 3, 2012, p. 285.

The Hebrew word "Sanhedrin" is likely derived from "synedrion," the ancient Greek term for "general assembly" or "judicial body." In Jewish sources, it refers primarily to the supreme religious court (of 71 members) that met on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, later relocating around the time of the destruction of the Holy Temple in the year 70 CE. However, there were also smaller local bodies in ancient Israel that were given the same appellation (but had 23 members) and often functioned in similar ways.

Please note that the following activity is divided into two parts: four brief text studies followed by a mock-Sanhedrin exercise.

Activity: "Sanhedrin Style"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slides #23–30; student materials pp. 9–13
- Flip chart, white board, or electronic device for groups to record their proposals
- Marker or pen for each student
- Chairs set up in a semi-circle if doing this exercise in person

Instructions to Set the Stage:

1. Tell your students that they are about to become members of the Sanhedrin! Their job will be to decide a difficult issue that has caused a lot of controversy on college campuses, in synagogues, and in many other organizations: "Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker."

Note to Educator:

Though the educator will facilitate a text study for students before introducing the specific "Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker" scenario to the students, it is important that the educator familiarizes themselves with the scenario in advance of teaching the classical Jewish texts so that they know where these texts lead.

The educator should review the scenario written below. Of course, the educator is welcome to adjust the scenario for their students however they would like.

> *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.*

2. Explain to the students that the ancient Jewish High Court, known as the Sanhedrin, employed many procedures that encouraged and enabled *mahloket le-shem shamayim*

(constructive disagreement). So before acting as members of the Sanhedrin adjudicating a particular case, the students first need to learn some of those procedures.

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

Part I: Text Study

We are going to study four short texts. **Each text demonstrates one guideline that the Sanhedrin employed in order to promote constructive disagreement when the High Court was in session.**

As always, it is up to the educator to choose which text(s) and discussion question(s) are appropriate for your specific class or setting. Also, the educator can choose to lead the following text studies with the whole class or divide the students into *hevrutot* (learning partners) in person or in Zoom breakout rooms.

Note to Educator:

Text 3.4, below, was included in unit 2 (pp. 30–31) regarding the external connections necessary for engaging in constructive conflict. In that context, we emphasized how the seating arrangement reflects the value of transparency. If you taught this text in unit 2, you may want to use this as an opportunity to reinforce that concept, and to add the idea of each person having a voice in the discussion.

Guideline #1:

Sit so everyone can hear and see one another.

Text 3.4 (see slide #23)

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 (see slide #24)?
2. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?

Sitting in a semi-circle promotes the idea that the "truth" is not in the front of the room but in the middle where everyone can argue respectfully and equally. Each of the 71 judges has a voice in the judicial proceedings. All opinions, despite the hierarchy of power, were encouraged to be heard and valued. Also, the judges' ability to see each other sets a tone of transparency, which is an important aspect of justice.

Note to Educator:

You may want to ask your students for other examples in which the seating arrangement is intended to reflect that "truth is in the middle." For example, the U.S. Senate, Israeli Knesset, and other cultural models such as the Jirga in Pakistan all include semi-circle seating arrangements (see slides#25–26).

Guideline #2:

Make sure nobody is intimidated about sharing their own opinion.

Text 3.5 (see slide #27)

Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:2

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

משנה סנהדרין ד:ב

דִּינֵי נְפָשׁוֹת מַתְחִילִין מִן הַצַּד.

1. How do you understand this text?
2. How may this be a guideline for encouraging disagreement?

   It is important to note that the most junior judges sat on the sides of the semi-circle and the more senior judges filled in the middle of the semi-circle. The head of the Sanhedrin, known as the Nasi, sat at the center of the semi-circle.

   So "beginning from the side" in capital cases refers to the order in which the judges would cast their vote for the verdict. The judges on the side, the most junior judges, voted first and then the more senior judges voted until, ultimately, the Nasi sitting in the center of the semi-circle cast the final vote of the 71 judges.

   Some commentaries, like Maimonides, seem to understand that this procedure was intended to encourage those of lesser status not to be intimidated from stating their opinions. Others, however, understood this as primarily about preventing the more powerful from silencing those less powerful.
3. To what extent have you ever felt intimidated when expressing your opinions? Have you ever, even unintentionally, intimidated others when they were expressing their opinions?

Guideline #3:

Be careful not to be surrounded only by those who agree with you.

Text 3.6 (see slide #28)

Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin 17a

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

בבלי סנהדרין יז ע"א

אָמַר 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?

   At first glance, this Talmudic statement is shocking. Why should a person whom all of the judges agree is deserving of death be set free as a result of a unanimous *conviction*?!

   The accused would not be set free necessarily due to a presumption of innocence. Rather, a unanimous decision of the 71 judges makes us suspicious that the judges have fallen prey to **groupthink**. That is the phenomenon in which a group of people are so driven to be alike and conform that their decisions are motivated by the goal of

conformity rather than the facts. We cannot take that risk when someone's life is in the balance.

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? (Ask for examples.)

Guideline #4:

Know how to argue both sides before voting.

Text 3.7 (see slide #29)

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?

   Proving that a reptile is pure from biblical texts sounds absurd since a reptile is the very definition of something impure in the Bible (Leviticus chapter 11, 29-39)! Yet to qualify as a member of the Sanhedrin, one had to be able to prove the nearly impossible to show that they are not confined to a strict interpretation of the texts but are interpreters of the texts, with the ability to make the appropriate ruling for a particular case in front of them. This means arguing against consensus thinking.

   The later Midrash Psalms 12 expands further how the famous Rabbi Meir would actually do this. This midrash tells that this great scholar knew how to argue the purity and impurity of a reptile with 49 proofs for each side. In other words, to be a rabbinic scholar of the highest level, worthy of sitting on the Sanhedrin, one had to know how to argue each case 49 ways for and 49 ways against.

   This 49/49 concept should sound very familiar to your students!

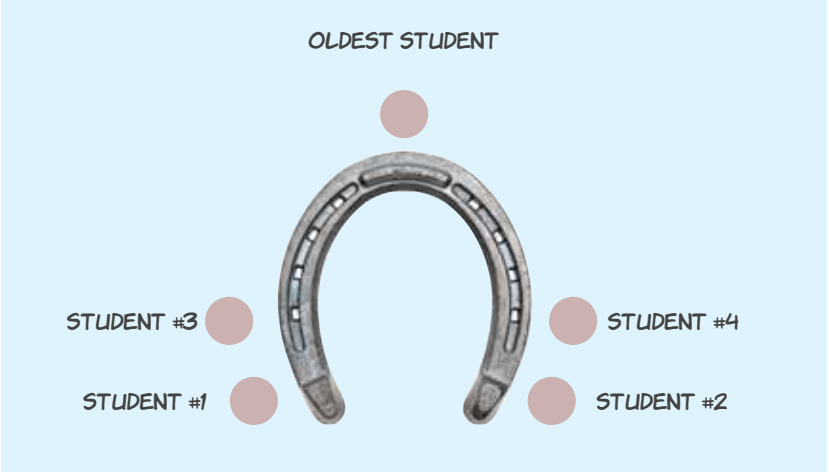
4. When might it be a weakness to be able to argue both sides?
5. To what extent do you feel that you are able to argue both sides of an argument, especially when relating to ideas, values, and politics?

Part II: Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker?

Instructions:

1. **Introduce the exercise**
   - The following bullet point instructions may be followed if you are facilitating this exercise in person:
     - ◊ Set up the chairs in a semi-circle (1 chair/student).
     - ◊ Ask all of the students to line up at the front of the room in age order. You can time them as they complete the task as a way to add to the fun.
     - ◊ Instruct the two youngest students, Students #1 and #2, to sit on

either end of the semi-circle. Then assign Student #3 to sit next to Student #1 and assign Student #4 to sit next to Student #2. Continue to follow this seating pattern until the oldest student in the class is the last to be seated and will sit in the remaining chair located at the center of the semi-circle (see slide #30 for an illustration).



◊ Tell the students that they are now in the proper seating arrangement to be members of the Sanhedrin! (based on text 3.5)

- Explain that students are about to participate in a mock-Sanhedrin exercise that is based on a well-known constructive controversy exercise. It is a critical way to arrive at good decisions to dilemmas and is core to strengthening the culture of democracy.
- Tell students that a dilemma has come before them, the Sanhedrin.
- They must work to decide whether to "Keep or Cancel the Controversial Speaker."
- Remind students to use their constructive communication skills - active listening, asking questions for understanding, speaking in the first person, being aware of assumptions, etc.
- Have someone read the "Keep or Cancel" dilemma (see student materials pp. 10–11). This can also be done in *hevruta* after splitting up into *batei midrash*.

2. Split into *batei midrash* (study houses) and *havrutot* (study pairs)

- Explain that the Sanhedrin was divided up into different schools of thought or *batei midrash*. In addition, when there was a particularly difficult decision to make, the Sanhedrin would split into small groups to discuss and argue the matter and then meet back. These small groups were called *batei midrash*, which were not only houses of study but also, in some ways, different political parties.
- Split up the larger group (Sanhedrin) into groups of 4. Note that if needed, groups of 5 are better than a group of 2 or a group of 3. Each of these groups is called a *beit midrash*.
- 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.
- You may want to ask participants to write down for themselves what their intuitive answer is to the dilemma. You can then ask them to split up into pairs of two based upon their intuitive answer to this question with each pair arguing first what they feel to be the correct response. If necessary, assign the groups as A or B so that there are equal numbers of A and B.

3. **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.

4. **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.

5. **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.

6. **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.

7. **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 full class).
    - Students should feel free to add caveats to their "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 Orchard institution."

8. **Present proposals**

    - All members of the Sanhedrin gather back into a semi-circle.
    - A representative of each *beit midrash* briefly presents their written proposal and reasoning to the rest of the Sanhedrin.

9. **Vote**

    - After hearing from all of the *batei midrash*, explain that it is time to vote if we should "keep but..." or "cancel and ..." the controversial speaker, just as the Sanhedrin would do after gathering back together.
    - Starting from the side (like the Sanhedrin) ask each individual to go around the circle and say how they vote (either "keep but..." or "cancel and..."). Note that the individual does NOT have to vote in accordance with the final proposal of his/her *beit midrash*.
    - As each member votes, give them the option to share in a sentence why they are voting this way, and a comment about the experience of going through this process. You may want to ask if they shifted at all from the intuitive response they wrote down in the beginning.
    - Keep a tally of the initial votes for all to see.
    - After voting, just like in the Sanhedrin, members can change their vote if persuaded by the rationale of a fellow member. Ask if anyone would like to change their vote. If so, ask that person what persuaded them to change their vote.
    - Take a tally of the final vote.

Congratulate your students on a successful Sanhedrin session!

Thank them for using their constructive conversation skills to consider multiple perspectives before casting their own vote about an authentic issue that has generated a lot of debate in the real world.
Note that this process - listening and considering the other 49 before voting on a course of action - is precisely the procedure that God instructed Moses in the Midrash Tehillim text in Unit 1.

Note to Educator:

For more information about the "Constructive Controversy" tool, please read the information below that is based on Mind Tools.

Constructive Controversy is a tool to engage people in hearing and presenting differing ideas and perspectives before solving a problem or making a decision. Through deliberately structured examination and advocacy of clashing ideas or perspectives, the aim is to arrive at better solutions and make decisions with increased reasoning and understanding. The Constructive Controversy process is very similar to that of the guidelines of encouraging *mahloket le-shem shamayim* in the ancient Sanhedrin.

It is a problem-solving approach introduced by David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson in 1979, and since then the approach has been researched and validated as a model for developing robust and creative solutions to problems. It is a critical exercise for strengthening the democratic culture of constructive conflict.

The technique draws on five key assumptions:

1. We adopt an initial perspective towards a problem based on our personal experiences and perceptions.
2. The process of persuading others to agree with us strengthens our belief that we are right.
3. When confronted with competing viewpoints, we begin to doubt our rationale.
4. This doubt causes us to seek more information and build a better perspective, because we want to be confident with our choice.
5. This search for a fuller perspective leads to better overall decision-making.

The more times you go through the cycle (of these key assumptions), the closer you come to the "truth" or the "right"solution.

For further reading: David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson (2000), "Civil Political Discourse In a Democracy: The Contribution of Psychology," Peace & Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 6(4), 291–317.

Lesson 3 Harm Happens - How Do We Meet It?

Key vocabulary and concepts in lesson 3:

(see slide #31)

- Tochacha (constructive feedback)
- Tips for Tochacha
- Calling Out vs. Calling In

This lesson teaches skills associated with the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making.

Click here for details about each competency.

Normalizing the Need for Repair

In lesson 1, we learned practical skills for engaging in constructive communication: active listening, asking non-judgmental questions, and speaking with humility. In lesson 2, we had a chance to put those skills into practice working together as members of the Sanhedrin deciding a difficult case.

However, no matter how adept we are in constructive communication skills, sometime harm happens in conversation with others. Whether in groups or between individuals, agreements are sometimes broken, impactful accidents happen, and people act in troublesome ways. During difficult moments or emotionally charged conversations, we are more likely than normal to slip up and say or do something hurtful.

Reflection Questions: (see student materials p.14)

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?

All of us mess up sometimes – it is part of being human. Reflecting on times when we ourselves made a mistake or hurt someone else can help us access empathy and respond skillfully when someone else's actions are hurtful to us.

Acknowledging that troublesome behavior is normal, we can see it as an opportunity for growth, cultivating social and emotional skills, and making things right. Responding to wrongdoing can be a powerful learning experience.

Because we know that hurt sometimes happens when we relate to one another, it is important that we learn how to address it, and move towards repairing relationships.

When agreements are broken or behaviors miss the mark, what can we do about it?

Tochacha: Constructive Feedback

When someone behaves in a hurtful way, there is often a need to constructively communicate about the incident. Jewish tradition has a lot of wisdom to offer us about the concept of *tochacha*, which we will refer to in this lesson as "constructive feedback."

Below are a series of four Jewish texts that relate to various aspects of *tochacha*. Each text is followed by discussion questions. As always, it is up to the educator to choose which text(s) and discussion question(s) are appropriate for your specific class or setting.

Also, the educator can choose to lead the following text studies with the whole class or divide

the students into *hevrutot* (learning partners) in person or in Zoom breakout rooms.

Text 3.8 (see slide #32; student materials p.14)

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 – You should not feel hatred towards a fellow person (especially a member of your community) in your heart.
   - הוֹכֵחַ תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת־עֲמִיתֶךָ – You should discuss what is bothering you with someone with whom you have an interpersonal issue.
   - וְלֹא־תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטְא – Do not commit a sin or miss the mark because of that person.
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")?

   The word "אָחִיךָ" implies that this person is close to you or connected to you in some way. We have a tendency to hide our feelings in our hearts and not express them when someone close to us hurts us. It often feels like too big a risk to "rock the boat" of a close relationship. Therefore, part of the verse highlights that it is important to offer *tochacha* even to our friends, families, and those closest to us.
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"?

   When a person inflicts harm and then receives constructive feedback about the incident, they are more likely to learn from the experience, and less likely to repeat the harm in the future. If they do not receive that feedback, they might never even know that they caused someone else pain. Thus, they are likely to commit similar harmful behavior in the future.

   Additionally, we are negatively impacted and more likely to hold resentment when we have been harmed and we do not communicate about it. *Communicating through constructive feedback can provide an opportunity for healing and restoration.*
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"?

   When we do not offer feedback after witnessing or experiencing a wrongdoing, our perception of that person and our relationship to them might be significantly impacted. The hurt festers inside of us and leads to grudges and resentment. Holding onto resentment and judgments can impact our own actions towards that person, as we might act in a harmful way due to our own unprocessed or uncommunicated hurt. These actions can have a ripple effect on others who may be somehow involved or even on our broader communities.

Text 3.9 (see slide #33; student materials p.15)

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?

   There are a whole variety of reasons why it may be very difficult to receive critical feedback:

   - We may feel threatened, shamed or embarrassed by the way in which the critical feedback was delivered.
   - The critical feedback may feel unfair.
   - The critical feedback may make us feel as though our *positive actions* are unacknowledged, eclipsed by the action being criticized.
   - The **impact** of our action was different than our **intention**. The impact and intention both matter but, unfortunately, our impact does not always line up with our intention! Receiving compassionate and constructive feedback on the impact of our actions can help us close that gap.

2. In this example, Rabbi Tarfon says that when one rebukes another by saying "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?

   People tend to deflect criticism, because the critique puts them on the defensive. Deflection often takes the form of accusation. For example, "You're annoyed that I left a glass in the sink last night?! You left a gross pot in the sink for three days last week!" When deflection takes the form of accusation, the initial feedback-giver may become angry and defensive, leading to an escalation of the conflict.

3. Rabbi Elazar ben 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?

   It can be intimidating to offer feedback when we are unsure of how it will be received. Sometimes we are afraid of hurting the other person's feelings. Power dynamics can also make it complicated. For instance, I might be intimidated to offer feedback to my boss if I am afraid that it might put my job in jeopardy.

Offering feedback constructively is an art that requires some measure of gentleness so that we do not unnecessarily shame the person to whom we are offering it. If we perform this 'art' well, there is also a much greater chance that a person will be receptive to the constructive feedback.

Note to Educator:

You may want to personalize these discussion topics for your students by asking them to give examples from their own lives wherein they found it difficult to give and/or receive critical feedback. You can also ask them to think of examples where they were able to effectively give or receive critical feedback. What are some of the factors that made it more or less effective?

We learn from the previous sources that offering feedback is a responsibility that we all share, but that giving and receiving feedback constructively and effectively can be challenging. The following two texts (3.10 and 3.11) give some guidance as to how to effectively offer *tochacha*.

Note to Educator:

Texts 3.10 and 3.11 address how the feedback-giver's emotional state and tone of voice impact the effectiveness of the feedback and how it will be received. This is connected to the concepts *Ohev Shalom* and *Rodef Shalom* that we discussed in Unit 1. If we attain a certain degree of peace and clarity within ourselves first, we will be much more prepared and likely to cultivate it in our relationships with others.

Text 3.10 (see slide #34; student materials p.16)

Rabbi Yehudah Leib, 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?

   As we learned in Unit 2, sometimes strong emotions can impede our ability to access empathy, think critically, and communicate clearly. If we are angry, we might not be ready to dig deeper, consider the bigger picture, and try to put ourselves in the other person's shoes to imagine their point of view. And, if we don't have some measure of peace within ourselves, we are less capable to establish it with another. Therefore, giving feedback to someone else while we are angry is likely only to inflame tensions rather than resolve problems.

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

   As we learned in Unit 2, formulating an intention can help us to extend a clear and welcoming invitation to the other person, and to stay focused during the conversation. Understanding our intention also gives us a sense as to whether or not the conversation is likely to be effective; if our intention in offering feedback is to make the other person feel bad, it will likely backfire or exacerbate the situation. If our intention is to communicate the impact of their actions as an act of care for ourselves and others, and to help the person grow, it's more likely to lead to a *mahloket le-shem shamayim*.

Text 3.11 (see slide #35; student materials pp.16–17)

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 from 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.

אורחות 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, 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?

    It may be helpful here to remind students of the material we covered in Unit 2, Lesson 2: "It Starts With Me." Mindful awareness can help us to identify through physiological cues when we are angry, and mindful breathing can help us to re-regulate the nervous system so that we will be more equipped to engage in a conversation with access to the areas of the brain that enable critical thinking and empathy. We can also consider healthy, safe and non-violent ways to process anger physiologically, which can also help to regulate the nervous system and 'get back into the driver's seat.' These strategies may include physical exertion, journaling, expressive arts, or talking it out with a trusted friend or mentor.

Takeaways:

We learn from these four texts that feedback, if done well, can help both people involved to learn, grow, and better align the impact of their actions with their intentions. But if done poorly, it can be damaging and actually reinforce the harm.

We also learn from these sources that not only is the act of offering feedback something that requires compassion and skill - the act of *receiving feedback* requires compassion and skill, as well. Given in a compassionate and skillful way, feedback can be a valuable gift to the person on the receiving end.

Reflection Question: (see student materials p.17)

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?

How To Give and Receive *Tochacha*

Now that we understand why it is so important to offer constructive feedback when someone has missed the mark - and why it is so beneficial to receive it well when someone offers it to us - we will explore some best practices for offering and receiving constructive feedback in an effective, compassionate manner.

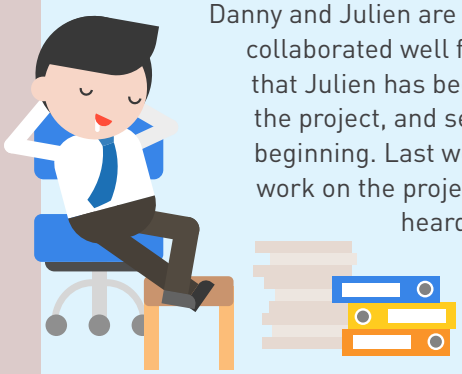
Activity: "Feedback Frenzy"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #36; student materials pp.17–18

Instructions:

1. Either individually or as a whole class, students should read the hypothetical scenario below (see slide #36; student materials pp. 17–18):



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. Ask for two volunteers to demonstrate the impacts of giving and receiving feedback well or poorly, in the context of the hypothetical scenario that they just read.
3. The volunteers will act out the interaction in three different ways:
    - **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. Invite the rest of the class to share their observations about the three scenes.
    - **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?

Now that we have explored how to give and receive feedback effectively and compassionately, the class can collaborate on creating a list of feedback guidelines, or "Tips for *Tochacha*."

Activity: "Tips for *Tochacha*"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #37 (optional); student materials p.18
- Paper/pen or shared online document

Instructions:

1. Invite students to share their own suggested guidelines for giving and receiving feedback constructively.
2. A scribe can record the two lists, which can then be posted in the classroom or shared as a document for students to keep.

Note to Educator:

We have compiled a few recommended guidelines for giving and receiving feedback (see slide #37). During or after the class discussion, the educator can suggest any of these as additions to the lists if the students do not mention these ideas.

Guidelines for GIVING Constructive Feedback:

- Check your **INTENTION!** Are you sharing *tochacha* from a place of compassion and care for the other person's well-being, or wanting to shame them?
- Address **SPECIFIC** situations and actions; avoid generalizations.
- Focus on **BEHAVIORS**, not personality.
- Share the **IMPACT** of the person's behavior using an "I" statement.
- Deal with **ONE PIECE OF INFORMATION AT A TIME**.
- **DO NO HARM**.

Guidelines for RECEIVING Constructive Feedback:

- **Acknowledge what was said.** For instance: *"Thank you. I appreciate you taking the time to share that with me."*
- **Accept the feedback.** You don't necessarily need to agree, but you can accept that this is how the other person has perceived the situation.
- **Ask any necessary clarifying questions:** For instance: *"I want to make sure I understand what you're describing. Can you give me an example?"*
- **Share how you will address the situation or behavior that the person is describing.** Be specific! It's ok if you need more time to reflect on it. For instance: *"I will think more about what happened, and consider what you said next time this situation arises."*

Calling Out vs. Calling In (Optional Extension of lesson 3)

In today's social and political climate, there is a widespread phenomenon of being "called out" when someone does or says something oppressive or offensive, especially in discussions related to social justice or issues of identity. It is especially prevalent on social media, when the 'call out' in response to someone's post or image can go viral and attract attention from large numbers of people. It can happen on a public platform to celebrities and political figures, and it can also happen within communities or between individuals.

Is "Calling Out" a positive or negative phenomenon?

On the one hand, calling someone out lets that person know that their behavior is harmful or oppressive, and alerts other people to that person's behavior. Calling out oppressive behavior is

sometimes necessary in extreme situations and can promote accountability.

On the other hand, sometimes calling out can be an unfair, irresponsible, and/or an ineffective way to create change. As former U.S. President Barack Obama said (see slide #38 or click here for the full 2-minute video; student materials pp.18–19):

"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

When we are addressing a peer or a friend, calling out is usually not the most compassionate or effective approach. Sometimes it can actually reinforce the behavior, or lead to public shaming. It can also contribute to a culture that makes people afraid to speak at all, for fear of being harshly called out or ostracized.

While it is important to bring awareness to harmful behaviors, it is important to do so in a way that will help a person to grow and improve, and to care for the relationship. This kind of communication is often referred to as **"calling in"** rather than "calling out."

Is there a more compassionate way to call out oppressive behavior, and to help someone change their actions? **Can we draw upon our tradition's teachings about *tochacha* to understand how we can cultivate a culture of "calling in" rather than "calling out" in our communities?**

If this is a relevant topic for your students, consider facilitating a discussion circle on the topic of "Calling Out vs. Calling In." Use our discussion questions below as prompts for the discussion circle. If this is a particularly potent issue for your students, consider using an alternative discussion circle framework such as the "Fishbowl" or "Spiral" circle. These frameworks are included in the supplemental resources at the end of the lesson.

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 else 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 do 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?

Supplemental Resources

1. Adapted from "Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles"

a) Fishbowl Circle

- Form a basic circle and invite the students to 'check in' with a simple prompt.
- Invite volunteers or a selected group to form a small circle in the center; in a

class of 24 students, invite 4–6 into the center. Those who are not in the center are instructed that they are active in the circle in the "witness" role.

- The circle dialogue is conducted with those in the center. Those in the outer circle stay silent, until they are asked for witness comments. Witness comments may be elicited at any point during the circle, and should always be elicited at the end of the circle.
- At the end, ask witnesses to make observations about the circle: how it functioned, if it was effective, what could be done differently.

b) Spiral Circle

- A spiral circle is like a fishbowl, but with an empty seat in the center circle.
- People in the outer circle are invited to come and sit in the empty seat when they feel they would like to contribute.
- Those in the inner circle are invited to leave their seat and go to the outer circle after they have shared. The rule is that you may leave the circle only after the next person to speak after you has finished speaking.
- This type of circle is good in large groups, and also for discussing challenging circumstances when not everyone is ready to speak.

Lesson 4

Coming Full Circle

Key vocabulary and concepts in lesson 4:

(see slide #39)

- Connection Before Solution
- Resilience
- Compromise

This lesson teaches skills associated with the SEL competencies of social awareness, relationship management, and responsible decision making.

Click here for details about each competency.

The Power of Connection

As we learned in Unit 1, a *mahloket le-shem shamayim* is motivated by a search for truth. It values the connections between people involved in the conflict, as well as the aim to resolve the conflict. Conflict always presents an opportunity to learn more about another's experience and perspective. Hopefully, this principle can not only help preserve the relationships of the people involved, but even strengthen and deepen them. **Why are relationships so important?**

The Babylonian Talmud tells a story that illustrates the importance of relationships according to Rabbi Hillel:

Text 3.12 (see slide #40; student materials p.20)

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, גיריה. 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?

   Some explain that Shammai believed that this person approached him with the intention to mock Torah and, by extension, to mock him as a devoted scholar of Torah. After all, how could anyone seriously expect a precious and complex guide to life such as the Torah to be summarized in the time a person can stand on one foot?! Perhaps Shammai is making a principled decision here to defend Torah by dismissing someone who intends to cheapen it. He may believe that acknowledging this person would legitimize an offensive point of view.

Note to Educator:

You may want to use this as a chance to raise the question of whether or not we should give all people and all opinions an opportunity to be heard. Might there be some people who harbor negative intentions and therefore do not deserve the space to be heard? Might there be some viewpoints that are so reprehensible or dangerous that they should be shut down rather than given space in public discourse? If we do engage with these kinds of people or views, might we be conferring some sort of legitimacy to them? Is there a downside to NOT engaging with these people or their perspective?

2. How do you understand Hillel's response?

   Hillel's comment makes us think of the positive commandment in Leviticus 19:18, which states "וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֲךָ כָּמוֹךָ" - "Love your neighbor as yourself." Hillel's bold statement that "this is the entire Torah and the rest is commentary" speaks volumes to the value of relationships and care for ourselves and others. He seems to be saying that all the stories and commandments in the Torah are for the purpose of supporting and elaborating on this instruction. This story is one example of many conversations and commentaries in the Jewish canon that illustrate the sacredness of relationships in our lives.

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?

Connection Before Solution

If two people care about each other to at least some degree, it can be a much easier starting point for engaging in difficult conversations and solving problems when they arise. This does NOT mean that we will always have a meaningful relationship with someone whom we engage in a conflict. However, it does mean that it will likely be helpful to find some way of connecting with the other person before focusing on finding a solution to a problem. This is a principle called **"Connection Before Solution."** When we jump to solving problems without first connecting and acknowledging our shared humanity, we are much less likely to be open to one another's perspective.

Connecting with one another before trying to solve a conflict is one way of expressing that we care about the other person - even in the midst of an interpersonal challenge. **Growth is possible when care is present.**

Throughout these three units, we have shared a host of resources, skills and tools that can aid you when you encounter internal and interpersonal conflict. But the reality is that conflict is hard! Navigating internal or external conflict will not always go smoothly. However, it is important to remember that when conflict and challenge arise, the presence of love, care and connection makes transformation possible.

Sharing and receiving stories of our humanity is one of the most effective ways to connect with one another. Let's see an example of people who share personal experiences with the aim of

creating human connections, thereby moving one step closer toward peace and reconciliation.

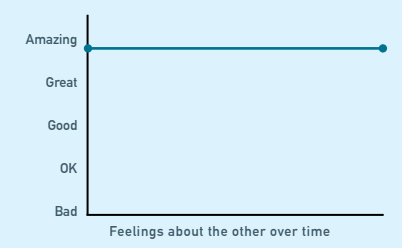
Click here to watch a 3.5-minute video related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (see slide #41; student materials p.20). Note: Pardes supports the idea of 'connection before solution' that is demonstrated in this video, but Pardes does not endorse any particular organization.

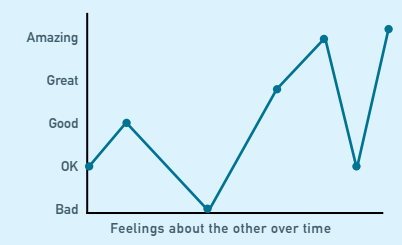
Discussion Questions:

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 practice cultivating connection before solving problems with others? For example:
    - With family members?
    - With peers?
    - With teachers?
    - With groups of people who hold different ideologies than us?

Respect the Process

Familiarizing ourselves with the **process** of conflict resolution can help us to navigate the ups and downs of conflict when it arises. When we study our own experiences and others' stories, we can observe that growth, healing, and peace-making do not necessarily occur in a linear way. We might wish that all of our good intentions and efforts to connect and reconcile with others would have a lasting effect such that both parties feel good about each other all the time (see slide #42). But that is not usually how relationships, particularly with people with whom we have disagreements, work.





Instead, sometimes we make significant progress in our relationship to someone with whom we often butt heads, but then we have a setback when a conflict arises again. It may feel as if we are taking one step forward, and two steps back (see slide #42).

When this happens, try not to get too discouraged! Sometimes resolution is immediate, and sometimes it happens over a long period of time. Regardless of the scope of a conflict, we can try to recognize the value of each step along the way. Even if the resolution seems far off, there is always something to learn in the process itself.

Of course, sometimes the reality is that we do not get to experience the ultimate resolution. In this case, you might say that the process of a conflict is the outcome! While there are conflicts that can be resolved in a single conversation, or in a day, or a week, there are others - both personal and societal - that can take place over a lifetime, or even throughout multiple generations. And some conflicts never get fully resolved. But we can take small steps forward. The video that we saw is an example of the beauty and power of the process of engaging even when the ultimate goal of long-term reconciliation is far off.

There is value in engaging the other, even when the process takes much longer than we may hope - or if there's no end in sight. In a single conversation, learning, growth and connection are still happening. And there might be a ripple of positive impact from that interaction that we may never even know about.

This brings us back to the importance of **mindfulness - being present in this moment, without judgment, just as it is.** There is value in bringing kind attention to what is happening, in all its messiness and imperfection, and doing our best to respond skillfully and compassionately. Even one instance of truly listening or being heard by another can be transformative. Don't underestimate the power of these small victories!

Cultivating our Resilience

When we are adequately prepared to engage in a conflict with another, there are many benefits to leaning into that challenge. One of those gifts is the cultivation of **resilience**.

Resilience is our capability to recover from a challenging situation and return to well-being. It helps us to stay the course when encountering difficulty, and to maintain certain principles about how we engage conflict. Remember our pro-tips from Hillel and Shammai (Unit 1, Lesson 2, p.10) regarding how to behave in a *mahloket le-shem shamayim*:

- Debate the issues without attacking people or harming relationships.
- Check your motivation: Are you trying to win or to solve problems?
- Listen to the other side and be open to admitting that you might be wrong.
- Consider that you might both be right, despite holding opposing opinions.

Reflection Questions: "Resilience Role Models"

Prompt students to journal about a role model for resilience in their lives.

- What qualities or behaviors contributed to that person's resilience?
- Did that person have any principles that they held onto throughout the challenges that they faced?

Invite students to share a story about that person, a challenge they went through, and how that challenge helped them grow. Students can share their own stories of personal resilience as well.

Compromise as a Sacred Act

Compromise is an important tool of conflict resolution (see slide #43; student materials p. 21). **What does our tradition say about compromise?**

We will examine two verses from Deuteronomy and the commentary of Nachmanides (1194–1270; Spain and the Land of Israel) on those verses.

Text 3.13 (slide #44; student materials p. 22)

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׳
אֱלֹקֵיכֶם 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 (slide #45; student materials pp. 22–23)

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 above and 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?"

   Nachmanides quotes a midrash, which claims that this refers to compromise and going beyond the letter of the law in our interactions with others. We have certain obligations that we must keep (verse 17), but God wants us to strive to behave in ways that extend beyond our obligations (verse 18).

   When embroiled in conflict, we tend to focus on who is right and who is wrong. And there certainly may be someone who is right or who is wrong according to the letter of the law. But the idea of compromise asks us not to get stuck or fixated on the question of right and wrong, but to try and find a middle ground that allows us to move forward.

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?

Living With Conflict

When it comes to conflict, some people seek to avoid it all costs while others are intent to resolve it somehow. But we also have a third option: **be present with the conflict.** The willingness to simply be present with unresolved conflict helps us cultivate intellectual humility as we appreciate the complexity, which may be ultimately part of a bigger picture that is beyond our comprehension. As we learn to value the process of working through conflict as well as the end result, we are more effectively able to be fully present to that process. The following activity helps us learn to hold questions that may not be so easy to answer, and to witness one another in our wonderings.

Activity: "Living the Questions"

(adapted from "Teaching Restorative Practice in the Classroom" Curriculum)

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #46; student materials p.23
- Chairs set up in a circle if you are facilitating this activity in person

Instructions:

1. Invite students to sit in a circle. It can be helpful to dim the lights to create a thoughtful ambiance.
2. Read the following quote from Austrian poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875–1926) out loud to your students (see slide #46; student materials p.23).

"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"

3. Explain that this circle will be about "living those questions" that we carry within us to which we may not yet have an answer - in other words, our wonderings.
4. Give an example of something that you wonder about for which you do not have the answer.
5. Have students turn their chairs and face outwards from the circle, or close their eyes. (If on zoom, turn cameras off).
6. Read the Rilke quote again (see slide #46). Then read the following questions, inviting students to silently consider these questions about themselves. Leave 5-10 seconds between each question. Ask students to silently free-associate, and see if the questions you ask lead the students to ask their own questions.
    - What do you wonder about yourself?
    - What do you wonder about your family?
    - What do you wonder about your close friends?
    - What do you wonder about your teachers?
    - What do you wonder about your school?
    - What do you wonder about your community?
    - What do you wonder about your country?
    - What do you wonder about nature?
    - What do you wonder about the world?
    - What do you wonder about the universe?
    - What do you wonder about God?
7. Invite students to say out loud something they are wondering, using the popcorn format.

Invite them to train their intuition by waiting for a moment after someone else's share, then choosing a time to speak when they are not speaking over someone else.

8. Witness round: Invite students to face the center. Have them share something that stood out for them about what people wonder, or what it is like to wonder.
9. Closing round: Invite each student to share a few words about their experience of today's circle.

Coming Full Circle

In this curriculum, we have explored a lot of important topics connected to *mahloket* via Jewish text, social emotional learning, and activities. This closing activity is a good opportunity to encourage student reflection about the concepts that they have learned and the skills that they have gained.

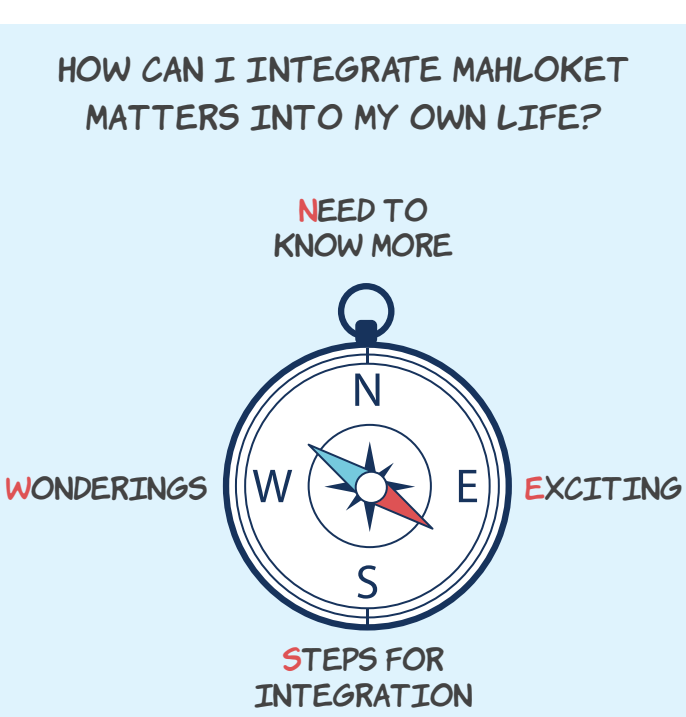
Activity: "Compass Points"

Materials:

- Pardes-provided slide #47; student materials p.24
- Pen/paper or Google slides
- Tape (optional)

Instructions:

1. Congratulate students on participating in the project "Mahloket Matters: Navigating Inner Challenges and Societal Discord through Jewish Text and Social Emotional Learning."
2. Remind students that they have explored a lot of important topics connected to *mahloket* through Jewish texts and gained practical social emotional learning skills.
3. Students should consider the question, **"How can I integrate Mahloket Matters into my own life?"** and then write responses to that question based on the compass point prompts (see slide #47; students materials p.24):



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?

4. You may want to ask several volunteers to share some of their answers. If you would like all of the students to share their answers with their peers, you can instruct students to hang up their written answers around the room and do a gallery walk. If you are facilitating this activity online, you can assign each student a Google slide in a shared slide-deck so that the students can see each other's work.

Note to Educator:

For this "Compass Points" thinking routine, we posed the overarching question prompt, "How can I integrate Mahloket Matters into my own life?" However, the educator should feel free to ask whatever culminating question they'd like. The question can be more general, like the one we posed, or it can relate to a particular concept or skill that the students have learned over the course of the curriculum. The **NEED/EXCITING/STEPS FOR/WONDERINGS** compass points can be applied to almost any question.