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Activity: Are you a good friend?

Try a little friendship self-evaluation test!

When a friend calls to complain or is upset about something, do you actively listen? Do you offer to hang out with him/her?



Everyone's going to a big party this weekend. Your friend isn't allowed to go and asks if you'll go with him/her to a movie. Do you go with him/her?



Your friend is home sick and doesn't ask you for the day's homework but do you collect it for her/him anyway?



Your friend is having her braces removed and asks you to go with her. You really don't want to. Do you go?



Your friend is being teased on a daily basis by one of your other friends. Do you stand up for her/him and say something?



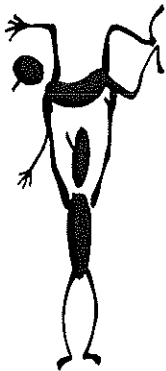
Make a list of qualities you look for in a friend. Write the name of someone you know that exhibits these qualities.

One aspect of friendship is the support we can receive from others, and in turn, the support we can give to our friends.

9 Two are better than one because they have a good reward for their labor. ט טובים השנים, מן-האחד : אשר יש-

10 For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow; but woe to him that is alone when he falls, for he has not another to help him up. י כי אם-יפלו, האחד יקים את-חברו; ואילו, האחד שיפול, ואין שני, להקימו.

(Kohelet, 4:9-10)



This text talks about a person who "falls." What else might this imply besides physically falling down?

A good friend is supportive of you and in times of sadness and upset, we can lean on our friends for emotional support. We also serve as a support system for our friends when they need it and celebrate each others' achievements.

- Do you feel the pain of a friend who is suffering?
- How would you help a friend who is in trouble?

Why is our society so obsessed with physical perfection? Doesn't God create us each uniquely for a reason? What is that reason?

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים-לְכָל-עֲדַת בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַאֲמַרְתָּ
 אֲלֵהֶם—קְדוֹשִׁים תִּהְיוּ: כִּי קְדוֹשׁ, אֲנִי יְהוָה.
 אֱלֹהֵיכֶם. 2 Speak to all the congregation of the children
 of Israel, and say unto them: You shall be holy;
 for I the Lord your God am holy.
 (Vayikra 19:2)

Parashat Kedoshim, in the book of Vayikra, is dedicated to Moshe telling the people about many of God's commandments. The above statement is the preface to this section of Torah.

- How does this statement set the tone for the rest of the parasha?
- What does it mean to be kadosh, or holy?
- How does this relate to the concept of b'tzelem Elohim?
- Are we inherently kadosh, or do we make our selves kadosh (or not kadosh)?

I am holy through my actions by _____

I am holy through my words by _____

What do males think about their bodies?

Body Image is not only a "girl thing." Guys too, scrutinize themselves when they look in a mirror. Male body image is rarely discussed, but it is real and plagues the minds of males as well as females.

Activity: Males—Myths and Facts

Answer the True or False question and read the follow-up fact

1. When I look at a sports or fitness magazine, I compare the images I see to my own body

True or False

Fact: Western Society promotes an idealized male body through media and cultural "norms"

2. I have tried a specific diet to alter my body (i.e. high protein, low calorie, low carb)

True or False

Fact: Seventeen percent of men are dieting at any given time

3. I go to the gym to "beef up." No girl wants to date a scrawny guy

True or False

Fact: Although exercise is to be encouraged as a healthy habit, 20% of regular exercisers are addicted to exercise either physically or mentally

4. There is nothing wrong with taking something to "help" my muscles grow

True or False

Fact: 3.5% (10th grade) or 4% (12th grade) males abuse steroids or muscle enhancing drugs.

Chapter Six

Being A mensch

What does it mean to be a mensch?

Acting according to the laws of derech erez can also be called “Menschlichkeit” or being a mensch. Literally, mensch means “man” but in today’s more egalitarian world, we use it to mean “being a good person” or behaving with Derech Eretz.

What does it take to “be a mensch?”

בְּמָקוֹם שֶׁאֵין אַנְשִׁים, הַשְׁתַּדֵּל לִהְיוֹת אִישׁ Where there are no worthy persons, strive to be a worthy person.

(Pirkei Avot 2:6)

Scenario One:

You’re on the basketball team and in the locker room, a bunch of guys are bothering one of the other team members. They’re teasing him about random things he can’t help—his glasses, his height, even the color of his hair (red!). It’s not affecting you at all so you don’t bother interrupting them to defend him.

Should you say something? If so, what would you say? If not, why would you stay quiet?



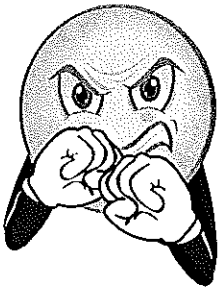
“A person who loves a friend cannot stand by and watch that friend be beaten or insulted. The person would come to the friend’s aid” – Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, Mesilat Yesharim 19:17

Make yourself a mensch and speak up. If you know it’s not right, why wouldn’t you say something? If it’s not about you though, why should you? By standing up for this person you are showing you respect him. You are giving him a level of dignity the others are trying to destroy.

The Meaning of Mensch

- What is a mensch?
- What qualities does a mensch exhibit?
- What are the barriers to menschlichkeit for males particularly? Is it not macho to be a mensch?
- Can a girl be a mensch? What types of things could a girl do to be a mensch?
- Do you sometimes fear that it isn’t cool to stand up for someone being teased or to perform acts of kindness? What do you think holds you back from mensch-like behavior?
- What makes a “man?” Who do teenage males look to as role models?

Remember: Cliques are exclusive clubs whose only real purpose is to make their members feel superior to nonmembers. While it is okay to have your own group of friends, it is never okay to be intolerant, exclusive, or disrespectful or judgmental. It is important to keep an open mind with your peers. You should never feel comfortable sitting and laughing with a large group of friends, while someone is sitting by him or herself. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who has been excluded, think about what that must feel like, and recognize that you could be that person tomorrow. Then get up, go over, and say hello.



Bullying

It may surprise teens to learn that cliques and bullying are closely related. Relational aggression is a type of bullying where social relations are used as the means to harm a peer, and while this may not be the sole reason that cliques are formed, it is certainly a common outcome of a clique.

Before we can talk about bullying, let's find out what it is:

Let's look at the narrative of Jacob and Esau:

כט 29 And Jacob sod pottage; and Esau came in from the field, and he was faint.
 וַיֵּצֵד יַעֲקֹב, נְזִיד; וַיָּבֵא עֵשָׂו מִן-הַשָּׂדֶה, וְהוּא עָיֵף.

ל 30 And Esau said to Jacob: 'Let me swallow, I pray thee, some of this red, red pottage; for I am faint.' Therefore was his name called Edom.
 וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו אֶל-יַעֲקֹב, הֲלִעִיטֵנִי נָא מִן-הָאֲדָמָה הָאֲדָמָה הַזֶּה—כִּי עָיֵף, אָנֹכִי; עַל-כֵּן קָרָא-שְׁמוֹ, אֲדוֹם.

לא 31 And Jacob said: 'Sell me first your birthright.'
 וַיֹּאמֶר, יַעֲקֹב: מַכְרָה כִּיּוֹם אֶת-בְּכֹרְתְךָ, לִי.

לב 32 And Esau said: 'Behold, I am at the point to die; and what profit shall the birthright do to me?'
 וַיֹּאמֶר עֵשָׂו, הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי הוֹלֵךְ לָמוּת; וְלִמָּחָה-זֶה לִי, בְּכֹרְחִי.

לג 33 And Jacob said: 'Swear to me first'; and he swore unto him; and he sold his birthright unto Jacob.
 וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב, הִשָּׁבְעָה לִי כִּיּוֹם, וַיִּשָּׁבַע, לוֹ; וַיִּמְכַר אֶת-בְּכֹרְתוֹ, לְיַעֲקֹב.

לד 34 And Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way. So Esau despised his birthright.
 וַיִּתֵּן יַעֲקֹב נָתַן לְעֵשָׂו, לֶחֶם וְנִזִּיד עֲדָשִׁים, וַיֹּאכַל וַיִּשְׁתֵּי, וַיִּקָּם וַיֵּלֶךְ; וַיִּבֹז עֵשָׂו, אֶת-הַבְּכֹרְחִי.

(Bereishit 25:29-34)

Did Jacob bully his brother Esau into giving him what he wanted, knowing how vulnerable Esau was?

Activity:

Let's think about some of the reasons that motivate or prevent people from acting in these situations.

1. **Brainstorm** about why people do not get involved in a given situation.

Some reasons may be: It is not my problem, It is not my job, It is not my responsibility, I don't feel safe, I don't know what to say or do, I believe in the rights of the individual. I may not now all the facts of the situation.

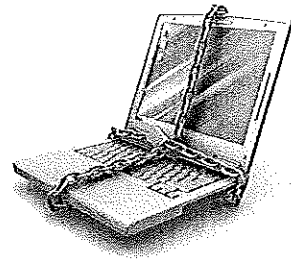
2. **Brainstorm** a list of reasons why people do get involved.

Some reasons may be: The person involved is someone I care about; someone helped me once; I didn't think, I just reacted.

3. **Think** about times when you did intervene or could have.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a new way of bullying and it can be far more devastating than in-person bullying—it spreads quickly and reaches far more people than in-person bullying ever could. It also allows the bully to be anonymous, if he/she wants to be. Cyberbullying is the willful and repeated use of electronic devices such as cell phones and computers to harass, intimidate and threaten others. Methods include texting, sexting, emailing, chat rooms, blogs, websites, sending photos, and posting fake profiles. (Sexting is broadcasting nude or semi-nude photos by cell phone text messaging. In 2009, legislators in at least eight states introduced legislation to deter sexting).



(The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy and CosmoGirl.com. 2008. Sex and Tech: Results from a Survey of Teens and Young Adults. Available at http://www.thenationalcampaign.org/sextech/PDF/SexTech_Summary.pdf.)

Cyberbullying: Pushed to the Edge

Recently, there have been a number of tragedies involving teens who had online relationships with a person who misrepresented her- or himself.

This is a true story of a 13 year old girl in Missouri who killed herself after receiving nasty messages from a boy she had met online. It turned out that the boy was really the mother of a former friend who lived four houses down the street. Megan Meier had been flirting via her MySpace® account with 'Josh Evans' for a few weeks and then started getting nasty messages from him. The last message suggested that "the world would be a better place" without her. Megan, believing she had been rejected by "Josh," hanged herself in her home.

Six weeks after Megan's death, her parents learned that "Josh Evans" never existed. He was an online character created in order to harass her by Lori Drew, age 47, who knew that Megan had been prescribed anti-depression medication and that she had a MySpace® page, along with Lori's daughter who was a classmate of Megan and an 18 year old employee of that family.