

Talking to Children about Jewish Identity in the Interfaith Family

Discussion Guide

Target population:

Parents; ECEC parents, Religious school parents, parents considering making Jewish choices.

I. Opening/Welcome

- A. Introduce the concept of Outreach
- B. Pass out “Intermarried :Refrom Judaism Welcomes You”

II. Creating a safe environment for the discussion:

- A. Ask each person to introduce himself/herself, and where they are on their journey. if they feel are comfortable sharing.
- B. Ask them to share children’s questions or comments about having relatives who celebrate different holiday, if they wish to do so.

III. Discussion

It is often difficult for parents to talk to children about topics that are difficult for parents to discuss themselves. Models for this discussion have come from literature about talking to children about adoption, death and sex i.e. Children want information that they can understand.

- A. Ask parents to talk about what they would say to their children before taking them on a plane for the first time.
- B. Children want to know:
 - 1. Who they are religiously
 - 2. That his/her religious identity okay with all of their parents
 - 3. That they can talk to their parents about religious identity
 - 4. Clues about how to spend holiday with non-Jewish relatives:
“we are helping xxx celebrate xxx, we are xxx”(if parents have made a choice)
 - 5. Different is okay and can be warm and comfortable
- C. Process the issues that were raised during the introductions.
Refer back to the discussion of talking to children about the plane where necessary to reinforce that the parents do have the parenting skills. Make sure that it is clear that children should have warm positive relationships with all of their relatives, and that children may need a little coaching along the way.

IV. Holidays /Grandparents

Refer to the chart of concentric circles

- A. Parents might consider this process; first, think about how they feel personally, and discuss the feelings with their partner, hopefully come to a decision about family identity, how to celebrate holidays, etc. Then talk to their children.
- B. The same is true if possible for grandparents.
- C. Discuss wrapping paper as a vehicle for talking to grandparents about decision about family religious identity and expectations and how grandparents can be fully included in family celebrations.

V. Handout “Talking to Children about Religious Identity in the interfaith Family”

VI. Closing: Read “May Your Conversations” – Berachot 17a translated by Danny Siegel