

Becoming a Mentsh

A Complete Program of Teen-Parent Workshops on Jewish Values

The Goal

To excite Jewish youth and their parents about personal rewards of living according to Jewish ethical values:

- ◆ How Jewish values can improve relationships in love and family, school and work.
- ◆ The inner, spiritual rewards of living Jewish values.

The Means

Experiential learning workshops with Teens and Parents together. In the workshops participants:

- ◆ Learn to identify the current philosophies in the American media.
- ◆ Learn the classic Jewish values on the issue – parent-teen relations, love and marriage, career. [Includes study of sacred texts.]
- ◆ Learn new concepts to apply the classic values to issues of contemporary life.
- ◆ Learn ‘how to’ skills for applying the timeless Jewish ethical values to contemporary life.

Programs

What is a Mentsh? [7th grade and above]

The impact of ethical behavior on relationships and self-esteem

Shalom Bayit [8th grade and above]

Resolving conflicts between parents and teens

Passionate Decisions [9th grade and above]

The ethics of relations between the sexes

Making Peace with Your Future [10th grade and above]

Career, identity, the struggle for success in a competitive society

Curriculum Kit

Teacher materials

Four newly filmed videos (30 - 50 minutes each) to frame and trigger experiential learning activities, including detailed teacher guide:

One workshop - \$55. Two workshops - \$100.00

Complete Kit, all four workshops - \$180

Participant materials

The Jewish Moral Compass - 11" x 17" card (\$1.50) [All workshops].

What is a Mentsh? - participant materials may be photocopied from the teacher guide.

Shalom Bayit Workbook - 8½ x 11, 16 pp. (\$4.50)

Passionate Decisions Workbook - 8 ½ x 11, 20 pp. (\$5.00)

Making Peace with Your Future Workbook - 8½ x 11, 24 pp. (\$5.50)

These copyrighted materials can be ordered at mentsh.com or call the Institute at 703 471 5344.

Features

A complete program of family workshops teaching Jewish values - for the under-served group of adolescents and their parents, .

The first educational program to synthesize timeless Jewish ethical values and the insights of modern psychology.

All programs use experiential learning:

Videos and graphics, small groups discussion, case studies, role plays, craft project, and family studies of classic texts.

All programs begin by identifying current conflicting values in America, continue with a study of classical texts, and move to instruction in skills to apply Jewish values to contemporary life. All programs conclude with private teen-parent discussion of important issues, from a Jewish perspective.

Workshops show teens how living according to Jewish values can benefit them personally—improve their feelings about themselves, strengthen current relationships with family and friends, and strengthen the families and careers they will establish in the future. Workshops also provide parents tools to reinforce Jewish values in the home, so that the concepts and skills that teens learn in the workshops become a permanent possession.

Programs meet practical constraints of religious schools:

- ◆ They are normally brief: two 2-hour sessions with teens and at least one parent.
- ◆ Because of the compelling interest of the topics, parents will attend.
- ◆ The first workshop, for younger students, can be shortened to as little as one two-hour session.
- ◆ Because of the sensitivity of the material, the first session of *Pas-sionate Decisions* is for teens only; parents join teens for the second session.
- ◆ The workbooks and Jewish Moral Compass contain ample materials for preparation and follow up with teens only in the classroom.

Leader Training

Because of the many new concepts that the workshops introduce, concepts that link classic Jewish values to contemporary life, leader training is available to help facilitators lead the workshops more effectively.

We will come to you to train workshop leaders, or to lead a demonstration workshop. The training seminar discusses the innovative concepts in the workshops, as outlined on the next page. For further information on training, contact Dr. Berkson at Berkson@mentsh.com, or call 703 471 9255.

Innovative topics and concepts

What is a Mentsh? (Grades 7-8)

Ethics and good relationships. What is distinctive in Jewish ethics.

Issue of moral relativism. The spiritual dimension of ethics.

The need for moral courage. Personal benefits of living an ethical life.

Interview with Aaron Feuerstein, “#1 mentsh of the USA” (Robert Reich) on combining doing good and achieving success.

Shalom Bayit (Grades 8-10)

Issues of responsibility and freedom between parent and teen – the ‘separation waltz’.

Applying justice to personal relationships. How unequal relationships can be fair.

Applying Jewish values to modern parent-teen relationship: the covenant of mutual respect.

Three different types of issues between parent and teen, the appropriate responses.

The role of values in effective communication and problem-solving.

Passionate Decisions (Grades 9-12)

Jewish values and education as countercultural. Importance of historical, cultural comparisons.

Applying Jewish values in a world with contraception and late marriage.

Relationships between modern psychology and traditional Rabbinic ethics.

The widespread misunderstandings of marriage; the current marriage movement.

Making Peace with Your Future (Grades 10-12)

Success ethic in America. Fallacies and truths about self esteem.

Judaism and the place of work in life. Proper and improper pride.

Achieving peace of mind in Judaism vs Buddhism and Stoicism.

Giving the right parental messages on ethics, competition and success.

Interviews with Aaron Feuerstein on applying Jewish values to work.

Endorsements

“I am extremely pleased with all the programs. ...Every program was innovative and well thought out. ...The integration of Jewish values and how they apply to our secular lives was made so completely that, I would suspect, our families now understand they are inseparable. ...The most wonderful sight was watching teenagers and parents talking together. They were discussing issues that were ‘real’ to each family and they [were given] the background to do so intelligently. ...You can see from the evaluations our parents and teens filled out, your programs made a difference.”

–Gloria Eiseman, Congregation B'nai Jehudah and
Secretary, *Jewish Educators Association*

“One of the most innovative and best programs for Jewish teens to come along in many years.”

–Rabbi Warren Stone, on *Making Peace with Your Future*.

“During the Spring of 2001, 20 teachers representing 13 institutions [in the Washington, DC area] received training in ‘What is a Mentsh?’ and *Shalom Bayit*. ...I was facilitating a group of students and parents and posed the question, “Who is a mentsh?” One student responded, “My mom, because she is raising my brother and me single handedly.” ...When I look at [his mom], tears were streaming down her face. ...This anecdote demonstrates the potential power that the “Becoming a Mentsh” program offers. ...The materials are wonderful and should be a part of every school’s family education repertoire.”

—Mindy Silverstein, Special Projects Manager,
Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington, DC

“We have reviewed *Becoming a Mentsh*. ...This program’s greatest strength is that it shows teens and their parents how Jewish ethical values can benefit them in dealing with vital issues of daily life—conflicts between parents and teens, relationships between the sexes and developing careers. We endorse this program ...and would like to see it implemented in our congregational schools in Greater New York.”

—Rabbi Neal Kaunfer, Director, Secondary Education Services;
Chana Silberstein, Director, Community Education;
Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York

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