

PARENTS AND CHILDREN WORKING TOGETHER FOR *TIKKUN OLAM*

Lesson plan for families

1. **Explain** the concept of *Tikkun Olam*. For the purpose of this lesson, let's think of *Tikkun Olam* as any act of improving the world. No action should be seen as too small or insignificant.
2. **Based on this article, dramatically re-tell the story** of Hayley Fields' drive to raise money for a new Torah for Beth Israel Congregation. Then invite questions and responses from the group. [Either the educator can do this, if talented at story-telling, or look for a parent or congregant who seems dramatically skilled to do this.]
3. In this story, a young girl got an idea for something she could do to help a synagogue community. Her commitment and caring inspired her own family and community. Haley's family and community followed her lead and helped her to follow through with her idea. They all cooperated on working together towards a goal.

Discuss: What is inspiring about this story?

4. Today we are going to think of ways that families can participate in acts of *Tikkun Olam* together.

Ask the children:

- Have you ever helped a stranger in any way? Tell us about that.
- What do you wish you could do to help the world if you were bigger? (Think of this as brainstorming. Encourage all ideas and respect them and write them down on butcher paper or on a blackboard.)

Ask the whole group:

- Do people have examples of how you, as a family, have already done something together to "repair the world"? List these on butcher paper or on a blackboard.
- Let's brainstorm more ideas of ways people could do works of *Tikkun Olam*. Make sure to include examples from your community. (You can also do some research ahead of time to find out what kinds of opportunities there are in your community and add those to the list.)

5. Now break into groups, with children in one half of the room and parents in the other:

Children:

- A. Have the children **draw pictures or make a collage** (using magazines) of what issues they would like to work on, or have already been involved in. Children may need help thinking about an issue.

OR

- B.** Ask the children to find a partner or two to **prepare a short charade** about what particular type of *Tikkun Olam* work they would like to get involved in doing. Either the group can choose a topic, or if they can't think of one, you can assign it. You may want to help them come up with ways for each member of the group to contribute somewhat differently to any given project (i.e. one can be cooking food while another is serving it at a shelter; or one can be building a house while another paints it, etc.) Give them time to prepare their skits. Then the children can **present their skits** to the children's group as a dress rehearsal -- you can help them tighten their sketches at this point, before they are presented to the parents.

Parents:

One of the issues parents struggle with is how to integrate *Tikkun Olam* into family life and how to help their children develop a social conscience.

- A.** In order to start this **discussion**, it can be helpful to look at our own relationship to *Tikkun Olam*:
- When you were young, did you have ideas about how you wanted to improve the world?
 - Did anyone ever listen to you about your ideas or follow your lead?
 - Can you remember how you developed a social conscience? What was going on in your life? Was there anyone who was a model for you? How old were you then?
 - Can you think of any examples of people or organizations that are currently working to repair the world which inspire you?
 - What do you find discouraging when you think about taking initiative to repair the world? How do you overcome your moments of hopelessness about the state of the world today?
- B.** Now let's look at our families today.
- What is something that you are pleased about regarding your child/ren and their attitudes about helping the world? When have you noticed their thoughtfulness towards others?
 - Do you think there are developmental stages in developing a social conscience? At what ages are young people ready to take responsibility in their communities? Are there risks to rushing this process? How is it possible to incorporate children at different ages into social justice work, especially within the same family?
 - Sometimes as a parent it is helpful to listen to our children's ideas about *Tikkun Olam* and to follow their lead. What do you think about this?

- As parents, we can also lead our families to participate in *Tikkun Olam* activities. Can people share instances of this that have been successful? How have you managed to include your children in these activities?

Pass out copies of the following story of a family who spent a vacation together working to rebuild New Orleans and give everyone time to **read the article** (*An Alternative Family Vacation*, <http://katrina.jwa.org/object/419>. Download and copy before the session.) How do participants feel about this model? Is there anything they can use from this model even with children who are younger than teenagers?

6. Conclusion:

Come back together and regroup as families. Have the children present their skits or show their art works and tell about them. Then, each family should **brainstorm ideas** of *Tikkun Olam* activities which they would like to participate in. Young people should go first. Each family member should be encouraged to think of at least one idea. All ideas should be written down. If there is time each family should share a few of their ideas with the whole group. Families should take home their lists and work to implement their ideas.

7. Alternative plan:

Families can each create skits together. In that case, the parents' discussion will have to be shortened and the children should make collages or drawings while the parents are meeting.