

Cheshbon HaNefesh: Accessing Mindfulness

Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion School of
Education Capstone Project

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Introduction and Rationale

The purpose of this capstone project is to introduce Jewish educators to the value of having a mindfulness practice – one that will enhance their ability to effectively teach Jewish teens. Teachers working with teenagers often face hardships that affect the classroom and their students. With the tool of mindfulness, teachers may be more aware of the dynamics and behavior that potentially impact their classroom. This strategy may also help their students acquire a practice of their own. The design for this project is to create an immersive professional learning retreat to focus on developing the educator's mindfulness practice. One of the goals of the retreat is to diminish the barriers surrounding the utility of mindfulness for Jewish educators. This notion could potentially change the way we approach learning in the classrooms. This capstone curriculum focuses on the first of three retreats created to be modules for a mindfulness incubator.

As Jewish educators, our ultimate goal is to engage the “whole human being”. The practices to be introduced during the retreat will hopefully help educators understand what Rachel Kessler refers to in her book *The Soulful Educator*: “When soul is present in education, attention shifts. As the quality of attention shifts, we listen with great care not only to what people say but the messages between words - tones, gestures, the flicker of feeling across the face.”(Kessler, 2000) This heightened awareness is a desired skill for teachers.

I chose this topic because of my personal journey with mindfulness. As someone who suffers from anxiety and mind clutter, I was looking for natural holistic ways to find quiet in my life. I became interested in yoga and then attended a few yoga retreats, eventually seeking to complete (and am almost finished with) my 200-hour yoga teacher training. Developing my own

mindfulness practice has had an enormous impact on my life and I am grateful for the growth that I have experienced the moment I started taking care of myself. When I began to hold myself accountable, I began to understand the personal changes that are possible when I expand the perspective of what was happening. Instead of asking myself, "why is this happening?", I can now pose the question: "what is the universe trying to teach me?". This is one of the potential benefits of a mindfulness practice for teachers. It can guide us to realize the power of reflection as a teacher, and also help teachers how to think differently about what a response might be when connecting with students.

My mindfulness practice is ever growing and changing. It is a way for me to let go of what's happened or going to happen. It is also a way for me to collect my emotions and hit pause. By hitting pause, I am allowing myself to acknowledge all the emotions and thoughts that rise with a specific topic/event, and work on letting them go. When I let go (or work towards this), I am surprised at myself at how involved I get in each moment. I find that it is good to check in with yourself and make sure you are validating yourself and forgiving yourself for what no longer serves you. This practice of letting go allows us to reflect on what didn't work in the classroom, the behavior that might not have been the best, and practice nonjudgement around "teaching and learning" and lesson plans too limiting.

For the purposes of this project, I am defining mindfulness as the act of paying attention consciously, in the present moment by showing up for yourself. What one person might be exploring, another might be just discovering for the first time. In my time practicing mindfulness, I have always returned to the idea that we are paying attention to things, utilizing a different lens – a point of view in which an educator is more aware of both themselves and the dynamics in the classroom. While there are many definitions of mindfulness, I am drawn to how

Thich Nhat Hanh defines the term: "Mindfulness shows us what is happening in our bodies, our emotions, our minds, and in the world. Through mindfulness, we avoid harming ourselves and others." (positivepsychologyprogram.com) This I feel is applicable to the education world because we are trying to create spaces for learning and growth, and that which requires self-awareness.

The mindfulness practice itself is ever growing and changing, as it should. It has a lot to do internally, with what said person wants to work on. That being said, there are countless ways to get a practice started. It can start with meditation, deep breathing, even a yoga practice. Each mindfulness practice should start with an intention, a motivation that will be something to come back to if the person loses focus. Pausing to practice should be a reminder to the self that we have the motivation to rewire the brain and connect with ourselves. Checking in with ourselves (loosening our jaws, taking a breath, etc.) helps one become more aware of the world around them as well as the person they are setting out to become. This check in (or mindfulness practice) helps further develop a quality of the mind that they are striving for by inviting a slow pace and conscious thinking.

There is emerging research about bringing mindfulness techniques into schools. According to Mindfulschools.org, there are a number of different outcomes that potentially emerge (happen) when you bring mindfulness into the classroom:

- Cognitive outcomes include better attention and focus as well as better grades
- Social-emotional outcomes include emotion regulation, better behavior in school, and empathy
- Well Being outcomes include less test anxiety, and a decrease in both anxiety and depression symptoms

These outcomes demonstrate how mindfulness could be effective from a young age. Mindful Schools starts their mindfulness practices in the classroom as young as kindergarten, ultimately setting their students up for long term changes and improvements in their lives.

Programs like Mindful Schools and Breathe for Change use breathing, yoga, mantras, social emotional learning, life skills, deep reflection, and more as ways to bring mindfulness in to the classroom. These programs are set up to be adapted and specific to any grade, and come with long term benefits like compassion, empathy, life skills, and a positive state of mind. Though there is long and intense training for the educators to carry out these programs, the benefits are endless and worthwhile. Elizabeth Frias, PhD writes: "Practicing mindfulness can help teachers develop a greater understanding of how their emotions affect their work and, therefore, build emotional resilience" (huffingtonpost.com). Her article calls for mindfulness to be taken seriously to a professional development level. This emotional resilience as a teacher is just one of the many outcomes that we would see in the classroom. Frias also writes: "Taking the time to practice mindfulness is an excellent opportunity for teachers to stop, sit quietly, and bring awareness to their emotions and how those emotions may be affecting them physiologically" (huffingtonpost.com). For teachers to be empowered enough to connect with themselves then empowers them to be able to better connect with their students. Frias works for an organization called Mindfulness First which does more of the amazing work (like the organizations listed above) of bringing mindfulness into classrooms by educating teachers and setting them up for success with different practices.

Teens

One might ask the question why a mindfulness practice is important for those who teach teens. Teenagers have the power to make decisions without consequence. Their brain doesn't

allow them to think that far ahead. My goal for designing this retreat is to give educators the tools to help teens make better choices and build relationships with them. These relationships will help support teens during their growth. This retreat series will also help educators understand why teens behave the way that they do. Specifically, this retreat will offer different styles of programming for mindfulness that could be brought into the classroom to build character, leadership skills, and support brain development.

The teen brain is in the process of developing, which causes stress and impulsive decision making. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 20% of youth ages 13-18 live with a mental health condition. Another frightening statistic is that (how) 8% of youth have an anxiety disorder. We have the power as educators to change of these statistics through multiple approaches; one of these I am suggesting is mindfulness.

In the teen brain, anxiety is a response triggered by the amygdala. The amygdala is the almond shaped structure that sits towards the back of the brain - behind the ears. The brain works from the back to the front communicating with each other, so as the brain develops, the more sophisticated part of the brain sits in the front. However, the amygdala is where we process intense emotions from these experiences, so it makes sense that anxiety is situated there (housed out of it.) Experience is the ultimate shaper of the teenage brain. Teens are jumping into new ideas and experiences to try and match their identity with their body. Daniel Siegel (2017) in his book *Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of The Teenage Brain*:

...both our genes and our experiences contribute to how synaptic connections will form and interconnect in various parts of the network into circuits. What this means is that the changes in the brain will be due in part to genetic information we've inherited and in part to experiences we engage in. Experience streams energy flow through particular neurons and strengthens their connections with one another. It is important to know about our neuronal connections because they shape how we feel, think, reason, and make decisions. (p. 90)

Siegel then explores how these neurons work with the brain, and what that looks like for each part. In each part, experiences help communicate(d) with each neuron, forcing it into an action. Experience shapes not only how we see our lives, but our brains as well. Teens are forming their identity in the world and figuring out the space between childhood and adulthood where lines often get crossed and confused.

By creating positive experiences for teens with their brain growth in mind, we can help teens make better choices for both their body and identity. Some of the ways we can support our teens are:

- Listen to our teens - they might be indirectly asking for help
- Learn through play - teens need to be able to explore their lives as a laboratory
- Respect teens and create boundaries
- Mindfulness - help teens find their practice to clear their minds and leave room for growth and positive decision making

These examples are just the beginning of what we can do to help our teens in their growth and help them form healthy habits for the future.

Teachers

Teachers (next to parents) are the people that teens see most. Perhaps One of the most important roles we as educators should have is the role of listener. We as educators need to constantly listen to teen's problems, experiences, and achievements. We are also in the business of mensch making - it also falls onto us that we are to help shape our teens. As teachers we also need to support our students to be the best versions of themselves. We can create programming

and mindfulness tools that will help shape their identity (best version of our teens,) and also help them form healthy habits for the future. In order to bring mindfulness and these values into the classroom, teachers need to be well versed in their own practice as well.

For teachers to be able to lead by example, we must explore our identity and deepen our awareness of the values we live our life by. We are mensch makers, and also meaning makers. The meaning making aligns with mindfulness because we are allowing students to explore their experiences through the different Jewish values in our classroom settings, whatever they may look like. Chip and Dan Heath from their book *The Power of Moments* write: "Defining moments shape our lives, but we don't have to wait for them to happen. We can be the author of them. (p. 5)" We have the power to change lives through moments by creating meaningful ones for our teens to experience.

This means that in order to facilitate authored moments, teachers should have their own practice in place. Through professional learning, teachers engage in stimulating conversation and interactions with fellow teacher. The focus of professional learning is that the teacher is the learner who is challenged and informed by the topic of learning taking place. Outcomes of professional learning include

- Analyze subject knowledge
- Deepening the knowledge of the topic
- Learning how to appreciate their students and their needs
- Reflecting processes on all fronts

Professional learning supports the educator as learner. The topic I am proposing for my professional learning experience is mindfulness. Through mindfulness, teachers will gain

understanding of how mindfulness works with the brain, gain insight on the positive attributes of these practices, and develop a practice themselves.

Professional development/learning not only supports the educator as learner but closes the gap between teacher preparation and teaching. This type of learning for our educators allows for the space to ask questions, learn a new skill, opportunities to learn from veteran teachers, and model a growth mindset. Heather Clifton and Peggy Kasloff define a professional learning community as a group of educators who work collaboratively in an ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve (Clifton & Kasloff, 2007 p. 1). With this definition in mind, I am suggesting that this retreat is intended to be the first module to introduce teachers how to bring mindfulness into the classrooms. Mindfulness is a personal journey, but as educators, it is important to remind ourselves that the real reason we put our effort into professional learning/development is to enrich our learner's lives.

Clifton and Kasloff also propose what our professional learning/development should look like. There are two common elements: reflection and collaboration. There should be an open and honest environment (attitude) for feedback, an attitude that supports growth, a shared vision, and a commitment to improvement (Clifton, Kasloff 1). These are just some of the in-depth attributes that are proposed for a positive and successful professional learning community. It is important to also look at how we prepare for this type of learning with our educators. For that, I turned to the writings of Gail Zaiman Dorph.

According to Gail Zaiman Dorph, professional learning/development should take place within teacher's regular work week, continue over time with sessions building on each other, model active learning, foster a collegial and collaborative environment, and include learning in

and from practice (Dorph, 2011, p. 9). These are not just reasons for professional development/learning but also reasons why it is completely beneficial to the environment it is supporting. By focusing on the learners, teachers, and curriculum, we are improving experiences for our learners.

Dorph also pose the question “what makes it challenging to create effective professional development?” (Dorph 1). By going into the four challenges of professional development/learning, we could understand more effectively about what a model of this type of learning for our educators could look like:

1. Teachers often lack solid preparation in their subject matter for teaching
2. Teachers often have a mimetic view of teaching and learning
3. Most professional development is aligned with the mimetic model of teaching and learning
4. Most professional developers have not been prepared to create learning experiences that reflect this new model of teaching and learning (Zaiman Dorph 2-5)

These challenges again focus on the teacher, learner, and subject matter (like the characteristics of good professional learning). With this focus in mind, I am proposing a retreat that will prepare teachers to find a mindfulness practice of their own (subject matter) to bring into the classroom (learner) that will effectively help change the environment that they are teaching in (teacher).

This is all fine and well for general education, but how do we adapt professional development/learning for our educators in Jewish education? Jewish education often mirrors general education by taking what works and adapting, but we are unique in that we create our own curriculum and experiences for our learners. Gail Ziaman Dorph and Barry Holtz (2000) write that “current thinking about effective professional development calls for the rejection of

traditional, replacing it with new images of meaningful professional development” (p. 68). It is time to think outside the box in creating meaningful professional development/learning for our staff to align our commitment to Jewish education with our passion.

Mindfulness

From a spiritual point of view, mindfulness forces us to account for the soul. Through practices with chevruta, meditation, and other outlets, we are taking care of our souls to create a space that lets us explore deeper our inner life. Teachers can utilize these tools to help make their classrooms safer spaces, open spaces, and encourage Jewish identity exploration. We want our teens to look at their Jewish identity as if they are exploring it for the first time each time. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said it best: “Awareness of the divine begins with wonder (Radical Amazement)”. Rabbi Heschel’s idea of wonder allows teachers to play and grow through themselves and their soul, but also still making their classrooms spaces for their students to wonder and grow through mindfulness techniques, and Jewish text study, in order to gain core life values.

Considerations

Mindfulness is by no means a cure for anxiety and impulsive behavior. It is an additional tool that teachers will have for their classrooms to help students develop skills for decision making and self-awareness. I am anticipating many parents may have certain objections and assumptions about mindfulness being introduced into the classroom. Parents might feel offended by the teacher challenging the strategies often employed in the classroom during stressful times. Parents might also feel teachers are taking too much time away from Jewish content learning. Finally, parents could be worried that their teens are taking on a practice other than Judaism. My

hope is that we can change parents' mindset and assumptions by having articles on hand with statistics that change their thinking, as well as presentations before school starts to ensure parents that they know the kind of learning that will be taking place in the classroom.

Desired Results

Mission of Organization:

1. Jewish educators will be introduced to and grapple with mindfulness through a Jewish lens.

Enduring Understanding and Essential Questions:

1. Mindfulness is an approach that can support and help develop effective Jewish educators.
2. A mindfulness approach enriched with Jewish content can provide Jewish educators with a foundation for self-reflection and an ongoing growth mindset.
3. What mindfulness practices will I incorporate into my Jewish life?
4. How will professional development impact teacher's ability to support the spiritual growth of their students?

Learner Outcomes:

1. Educators will know how to reflect on their daily lives through tools of mindfulness.
2. Educators will do mindfulness practices in their life and have the tools to do mindfulness in their classrooms.
3. Educators will value the discomfort of finding a mindfulness practice
4. Educators will explore practices that could potentially belong in their Jewish life.
5. Educators will be better equipped to impact student's spiritual growth and a connection to Jewish growth.

Acceptable Evidence for Learning:

- Educators will be paired with a chevruta for the weekend to reflect personally on their experiences with the activities
- Educators will reflect via graffiti walls (large pieces of poster board with posed questions for them to answer)
- Educators will create a mindfulness chart to use in their classrooms

Suggested Tools to Collect Evidence of Understanding:

- Educators will begin their mindfulness journeys by filling out the chart below as well as writing a letter to themselves with the prompt "What do I want to tell myself right now?" Educators will receive this letter and chart post retreat, after they have then fill out the chart again.

An Engagement Process:

- Check in through out the weekend using "3 Blessings"
- Wellness webinar post retreat: this will start out as a 1 a month zoom call facilitated by one of the educators. If growth persists, the calls could be twice a month

*Mindfulness Chart

	What are my practices?	What are my positive affirmations for myself?	How do I see myself?
Emotionally			
Physically			
Mentally			

Learning Experiences

Mindfulness Retreat for Jewish Educators

Schedule for the Weekend

Friday:

Arrival at 3 pm

03:00-03:10 – Arrival, welcome, and introduction

03:10-03:30 – Ice breaker

03:30-04:00 – Text study

04:00-06:00 – Shabbat dinner and candle lighting schmoozing

06:00-06:15 – Trust building exercise

06:15-06:25 – Reflection check in

06:25-06:35 – Meet your Chevruta!

06:35-07:35 – Mindfulness charts and letters to ourselves

07:35-07:45 – BREAK

07:45-08:45 – Joy and Identity program

08:45-09:00 – Check in w/Chevruta

09:00 – Bedtime

Saturday:

07:45 am – Wake up

08:00-08:30 – Breakfast

09:00-10:30 – Nature walk w/Blessings of Creation

10:30-11:00 – Reflect w/Chevruta & graffiti check in

11:00-12:30 – Tikkun Olam text study and meaning making project

12:30-01:30 – Silent Lunch

01:30-02:00 – Self-reflection

02:00-03:30 – Yoga & guided meditation

03:30-04:00 – Reflection w/Chevruta

04:00-06:00 – Mindfulness, breathing, & the brain

06:00-07:00 – Dinner

07:00-07:45 – Mindfulness on your own!

07:45-08:30 – Havdalah

08:30-10:00 – Empathy and Cheshbon HaNefesh

10:00-10:30 – Group reflection

10:30-11:30 – Sweets, schmoozing, & sleep

11:30 pm – Bedtime

Sunday:

7:45 am – Wake up

08:00-08:45 – Breakfast

09:00-09:30 – Check in and Morning introduction
09:30-11:00 – Mindfulness activity rotation
11:00-11:45 – Lunch in silence
11:45-12:30 – Mindfulness charts & self-comparison
12:30-01:00 – Closing
01:00 – L’Hitraot, see you at school!

Learning Activities and Developmental Issues:

Reflection: For this retreat, I wanted multiple outlets for reflecting. These different outlets help the educator explore what works for them and where they could be better at holding space for themselves as well as other people.

- Graffiti wall – large poster board with prompts printed on them for one word/one sentence answers to hang around the space used for the weekend
- Chevruta – each educator is going to be paired with a chevruta for the weekend. Each chevruta is given a prompt to follow for each conversation as a conversation starter, but don’t have to follow it. These conversations are personal check ins that help each other to be able to think deeper about the activity and the feelings that came up.
- Self-reflection – the opportunities for self-reflection are: journaling, gratitude lists, insight timer (a free phone app that allows for meditation with music etc.), and self-guided breathing.
- Group check ins – using the prompt “3 blessings”, educators will go around saying 3 blessings (or positive feelings/events) that either came up for them or happened to them.

Text Study: Each major program of this retreat starts with a text study. It is important that we frame each program with text to remind our educators that not only were we created in God’s image, but we were also given the sweet words of Torah as the best learning tool in our toolboxes.

Additional Experiences: Each of these experiences help the educator explore and grapple with different practices that could potentially fit their personal practice. Examples include:

- Yoga and guided meditation
- Empathy and holding space
- Tikkun Olam meaning making
- Nature walks

This retreat is built upon the idea the experiential education and professional learning are both safe and inviting environments for learning to take place. In these programs, educators will have the opportunity to know, do, believe, and belong in their Jewish identity, all through mindfulness.

Sample Lesson Plans:

Lesson One: Mindfulness Exploration Rotation

Curricular EU

5. Mindfulness is an approach that can support and help develop effective Jewish educators.
6. A mindfulness approach enriched with Jewish content can provide Jewish educators with a foundation for self-reflection and an ongoing growth mindset.

Core Concepts for Mindfulness Exploration Rotation:

- Educators will explore different mindfulness activities
- Educators will have the opportunity to try different mindfulness activities

Essential Questions:

- How will this mindfulness activity impact my daily life?
- What are the ways this mindfulness activity can benefit my life?
- Does mindfulness have a place in my life?

Learner Outcomes:

- Educators will understand the different types of mindfulness exercises that exist
- Educators will (do) practice various mindfulness exercises
- Educators will understand the value of mindfulness
- Educators will know what exercises to offer to their students as a result of the healthy balance journey they are embarking on

Materials:

- Raisins
- Yoga mats
- Mindfulness self-inquiry worksheets
- Pens
- Body scan script
- Radio for background music for body scan
- Prompts and questions for each rotation

Program Schedule:

09:30 am – 11:00 am – Mindfulness Exploration Rotation

09:30-09:45: Introduction and count off

09:45-10:45: Rotations

10:45-11:00: Wrap up

Procedure & Script:

09:30-09:45: Introductions and count off

- Welcome back educators from their check in
- Introduce mindfulness exploration rotations by saying a summary of each. Also let your educators know that there are reflection questions at the end of each exercise, if time allows.
- Have educators count off into groups of 5 by using count off method

09:45-10:45: Rotations

*Each rotation is to last 12 minutes. The easiest way to organize the rotations is for each group to move to the next activity that's ahead of them. *

- Rotation 1: Raisin exercise
 - The facilitator will ask the group to pay close attention to: The way the raisin
 - Looks
 - How it feels
 - How their skin responds to its manipulation
 - Its smell
 - Its taste

Reflection questions:

1. Did your mind wander at all during this exercise?
2. What about your senses helped you stay present?
3. Did focusing on a single object help you stay present?

*** Focusing on the single object of the raisin is meant to bring the participant's mind to the present, to what is right in front of them. ** *

- Rotation 2: Body Scan
 - See attached for full script of body scan
 - Step 1: The Body Scan begins with the participants lying on their backs with their palms facing up and their feet falling slightly apart. This exercise can also be done sitting on a comfortable chair with feet resting on the floor.
 - Step 2: the facilitator then asks the participants to lie very still for the duration of the exercise and move with awareness if it becomes necessary to adjust their position.
 - Step 3: next, the facilitator begins guiding the Body Scan. Participants begin by bringing awareness to the breath, noticing the rhythm, the experience of breathing in and expelling out. The facilitator explains that nobody should try to change the way they are breathing but rather just hold gentle awareness on the breath.
 - Step 4: next, the facilitator guides attention to the body: how it feels, the texture of clothing against the skin, the contours of the surface on which the body is resting, the temperature of the body and the environment.
 - Step 5: the facilitator guides awareness to the parts of the body that are tingling, sore, or feeling particularly heavy or light, s/he asks the participants to note any

areas of their body where they don't feel any sensations at all or are hypersensitive.

- A typical Body Scan runs through each part of the body, paying special attention to the way each area feels.
- After the Body Scan is complete and the participants feel ready to come back to the room, they can slowly open their eyes and move naturally to a comfortable sitting position.

Reflection Questions:

1. How do you/your body feel?
2. Do you feel like you know yourself a bit better after the scan?
3. How can knowing our bodies help us be aware of other people?

*For time purposes, this can't be as specific as body scans usually are. The facilitator should feel free to cut out what doesn't work for the timing of their rotation.

- Rotation 3: Mindful seeing
 - This exercise requires a space by the window
 - The facilitator guides the group following these steps:
 - Step 1: find a space at a window where there are sights to be seen outside.
 - Step 2: look at everything there is to see. Avoid labeling and categorizing what you see outside the window; instead of thinking "bird" or "stop sign", try to notice the colors, the patterns, or the textures.
 - Step 3: pay attention to the movement of the grass or leaves in the breeze, notice the many different shapes present in this small segment of the world you can see. Try to
 - see the world outside the window from the perspective of someone unfamiliar with these sights.
 - Step 4: be observant, but not critical. Be aware, but not fixated.
 - Step 5: if you become distracted, gently pull your mind away from those thoughts and notice a color or shape again to put you back in the right frame of mind.

Reflection Questions:

1. Did your mind wander at all by looking out the window?
 2. How many times did you have to restart this process?
 3. What did you struggle with the most? The labeling or looking at everything?
- Rotation 4: Mindful listening
 - Mindful listening can create an inner stillness in both parties as the speaker may feel free of the listener's preconceptions and prejudices, and the listener is free of inner chatter whilst learning valuable positive communication skills. Each participant will have 3 minutes to speak for time's sake.
 - The Mindful Listening exercise involves these steps:
 - Step 1: invite each participant to think of one thing they are stressed about and one thing they look forward to.

- Step 2: once everyone is finished each participant takes their turn in sharing their story with the group,
- Step 3: encourage each participant to direct attention to how it feels to speak, how it feels to talk about something stressful as well as how it feels to share something positive.
- Step 4: participants are instructed to observe their own thoughts, feelings and body sensations both when talking and listening.
- Step 5: after each participant has shared, you can break into small groups and answer the questions stated below. Next, you regroup into the whole group and have a discussion and debrief with these questions.

Reflection questions:

- 1: How did you feel when speaking during the exercise?
 - 2: How did you feel when listening during the exercise?
 - 3: Did you notice any mind-wandering? What was the distraction?
 - 5: What helped you to bring your attention back to the present?
 - 6: Did your mind judge while listening to others?
 - 7: If so, how did “judging” feel in the body?
 - 8: Were there times where you felt empathy? If so, how did this feel in the body?
 - 9: What are you feeling right now?
- Rotation 5: Mindfulness self-inquiry
 - See the attached chart for personal use. The Self-Inquiry Meditation is focused on self-inquiry, a technique used in meditation to gain enlightenment.
 - Take a comfortable seated position
 - Let yourself settle into your body and your mind
 - Try to let go of thoughts and clear the mind of its usual considerations
 - Focus your attention on the feeling of being you. Who are you? How does it feel to be you? What is it that makes up your inner self?
 - If you find yourself distracted by an errant thought, bring your awareness back to yourself by asking “To whom is this thought occurring?”

10:45-11:00: Wrap up

- Gather up the educators back together. Thank the educators for participating and sharing their reflections in each rotation
- Leave room for questions and comments – don’t turn away anyone from speaking. What they have to say is valuable and important.
- Let them know we are moving into lunch where they will have more time to reflect as their meal is in silence

*Rotations wording taken and adapted from positivepsychologyprograms.com

Body Scan Mindfulness Exercise*

1. Sit in a chair as for the breath awareness or lie down, making yourself comfortable, **lying** on your back on a mat or rug on the floor or on your bed. Choose a place where you will be warm and undisturbed. Allow your eyes to **close gently**.
2. Take a few moments to get in touch with the movement of your breath and the sensations **in the body**. When you are ready, bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your body, especially to the **sensations of touch or pressure**, where your body makes contact with the chair or bed. On each outbreath, **allow yourself to let go**, to sink a **little deeper into the chair or bed**.
3. Remind yourself of the intention of this practice. Its aim is not to feel any different, relaxed, or calm; this may happen, or it may not. Instead, the intention of the practice is, as best you can, to bring awareness to **any sensations** you detect, as you focus your attention on each part of the body in turn.
4. Now bring your awareness to the physical sensations in the lower abdomen, becoming aware of the **changing patterns of sensations in the abdominal wall** as you breathe in, and as you breathe out. Take a few minutes to **feel the sensations** as you breathe in and as you breathe out.
5. Having connected with the sensations in the abdomen, bring the focus or "spotlight" of your awareness down the left leg, into the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot. Focus on each of the toes of the left foot in turn, bringing a gentle curiosity to investigate the quality of the sensations you find, perhaps noticing the sense of contact between the toes, a sense of tingling, warmth, or no particular sensation.
6. When you are ready, on an inbreath, feel or imagine the breath entering the lungs, and then passing down into the abdomen, into the left leg, the left foot, and out to the toes of the left foot. Then, on the outbreath, feel or imagine the breath coming all the way back up, out of the foot, into the leg, up through the abdomen, chest, and out through the nose. As best you can, continue this for a few breaths, breathing down into the toes, and back out from the toes. It may be difficult to get the hang of this just practice this "breathing into" as best you can, approaching it playfully.
7. Now, when you are ready, on an outbreath, let go of awareness of the toes, and bring your awareness to the sensations on the bottom of your left foot—bringing a gentle, investigative awareness to the sole of the foot, the instep, the heel (e.g., noticing the sensations where the heel makes contact with the mat or bed). Experiment with "breathing with" the sensations—being aware of the breath in the background, as, in the foreground, you explore the sensations of the lower foot.
8. Now allow the awareness to expand into the rest of the foot—to the ankle, the top of the foot, and right into the bones and joints. Then, taking a slightly deeper breath, directing it down into the whole of the left foot, and, as the breath lets go on the outbreath, let go of the left foot completely, allowing the focus of awareness to move into the lower left leg—the calf, shin, knee, and so on, in turn.
9. Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity, to the physical sensations in each part of the rest of the body in turn - to the upper left leg, the right toes, right foot, right leg, pelvic area, back, abdomen, chest, fingers, hands, arms, shoulders, neck, head, and face. In each area, as best you can, bring the same detailed level of awareness and gentle curiosity to the bodily sensations present. As you leave each major area, "breathe in" to it on the inbreath, and let go of that region on the outbreath.
10. When you become aware of tension, or of other intense sensations in a particular part of the body, you can "breathe in" to them—using the inbreath gently to bring awareness right into the sensations, and, as best you can, have a sense of their letting go, or releasing, on the outbreath.
11. The mind will inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time. That is entirely normal. It is what minds do. When you notice it, gently acknowledge it, noticing where the mind has gone off to, and then gently return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on.
12. After you have "scanned" the whole body in this way, spend a few minutes being aware of a sense of the body, and of the breath flowing freely in and out of the body.
13. If you find yourself falling asleep, you might find it helpful to prop your head up with a pillow, open your eyes, or do the practice sitting up rather than lying down.
14. You can adjust the time spent in this practice by using larger chunks of your body to become aware of or spending a shorter or longer time with each part.

*Taken and adapted from postivepsychologyprograms.com

Mindfulness Self-Inquiry Chart

Name _____

Date _____

Rules of the self-inquiry road:

- ✓ Take a comfortable seated position
- ✓ Let yourself settle into your body and your mind
- ✓ Try to let go of thoughts and clear the mind of its usual considerations
- ✓ Focus your attention on the feeling of being you. Who are you? How does it feel to be you? What is it that makes up your inner self?
- ✓ If you find yourself distracted by an errant thought, bring your awareness back to yourself by asking "To whom is this thought occurring?"

I am checking in with My

- Heart
- Body
- Mind
- Soul
- Thoughts
- Other:

Am I being present?	
Do I need to bring awareness to this check in? If so, how can I be more aware?	
Is my mind starting to wander? Why is this thought occurring?	
What do I need from myself right now?	

Lesson Two: Cultivating Joy

Curricular EU

7. Mindfulness is an approach that can support and help develop effective Jewish educators.
8. A mindfulness approach enriched with Jewish content can provide Jewish educators with a foundation for self-reflection and an ongoing growth mindset.

Core Concepts for Cultivating Joy:

- Educators will explore different ways to cultivate joy
- Educators will have the opportunity to cultivate joy through deep self-reflection

Essential Questions:

- How does the story of creation help spark joy in our lives?
- What are the ways our two selves work together to cultivate joy?
- Does joy have a place in my life?

Learner Outcomes:

- Educators will understand the two different “selves” that play the part of joy
- Educators will do the work to cultivate joy through looking at their two selves
- Educators will understand the value of joy
- Educators will know what the challenges are to live a joyful life

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens
- Text study sheets

Program Schedule:

07:45 pm – 08:00 pm: Text study

08:00 – 08:40: Silhouette self & Enlightened self

08:40 – 08:45: Wrap Up

Procedure & Script:

07:45 pm – 08:00 pm: Text Study

- Use the text study sheet attached to this program for the text and questions
- *Who would like to read for us in either Hebrew or English?*

08:00 pm – 08:40 pm: Silhouette self & Enlightened self

- Have each participant grab sheets of paper and a pen if they haven't already

Now that we have read a bit of the story of creation, we are going to create two selves of our own that will help us on the path to cultivating joy and living more mindfully.

- *Silhouette self: On the first side of your sheet, imagine the self that you keep running from. The self that whispers terrible phrases and words to you when you are in tough situations. This is the self that we call the shadow: name your shadow. It could be anything from Samson to Smegal. Describe its qualities. What has it robbed you of? Tell us why you're ready to free yourself from your shadow... What is going to be possible when you stop listening to it?*
 - Give participants time to write down and define their silhouette selves
- *Enlightened self: Now that we have defined our silhouette selves, we are ready to move on and leave them behind! We are moving into our enlightened self: the self we REALLY need when the going gets tough. This is the self that we aspire to be, the self that we can call upon to give us those great pep talks when we need it most. Name this self and describe their qualities. How can we open the lines of connection and communication with this self? Start to develop a two-way communication between you and your best self.*
 - Give participants time to write down and define their enlightened selves
- *Reflection Questions:*
 - Which self was harder to define? Why?
 - If we had more time, which self would you need to spend more on?
 - What was holding you back from digging deep into yourself? What are the roadblocks that came up for you?
 - How do you feel knowing that you can defeat your silhouette self with your enlightened self?

08:40 pm – 08:45 pm: Wrap Up

- *Thank you all for being open and honest about participating with your shadow and wiser self. We are now moving into reflection time with your chevruta so feel free to go find them and find a spot that you feel comfortable talking in.*

Creation Text Study

Genesis 1:26-28

<p>26</p> <p>וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדֹמוֹתֵינוּ וַיֵּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבַעֲוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל-הָאָרֶץ וּבְכָל-הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:</p> <p>27</p> <p>וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:</p> <p>28</p> <p>וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹהִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלְאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וּכְבִּשְׁתָּהּ וּרְדּוּ בְּדִגְתַּת הַיָּם וּבַעֲוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל-חַיַּת הָרֶמֶשׂ שֶׁ עַל-הָאָרֶץ:</p>	<p>26</p> <p>God now said, "Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness; and let them hold sway over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, over the beasts, over all the earth, over all that creeps upon the earth."</p> <p>27</p> <p>So God created the human beings in [the divine] image, creating [them] in the image of God, creating them male and female.</p> <p>28</p> <p>God then blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and tame it; hold sway over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, and over every animal that creeps on earth."</p>
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Genesis 2:4-8

<p>4</p> <p>אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ בְּהִבְרָאָם בְּיוֹם עֲשׂוֹת יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶרֶץ וּשְׁמַיִם:</p> <p>5</p> <p>וְכָל יֹשֵׁי הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִהְיֶה בָאָרֶץ וְכָל-עֵשֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶה טָרֵם יִצְמַח כִּי לֹא הִמְטִיר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים עַל-הָאָרֶץ וְאָדָם אִין לַעֲבֹד אֶת-הָאֲדָמָה:</p> <p>6</p> <p>וְאֵד יֵצֵא מִן-הָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת-כָּל-פְּנֵי-הָאֲדָמָה:</p> <p>7</p> <p>וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפָּח בָּאָפִיו נְשָׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְגִפְשׁ חַיָּה:</p> <p>8</p> <p>וַיִּטֵּעַ יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים גֶּן-בְּעֶדֶן מִקְדָּם וַיִּשֶׁם שָׁם אֶת-הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר יָצָר:</p>	<p>4</p> <p>This is the chronicle of heaven and earth when they were created, on the day God made earth and heaven.</p> <p>5</p> <p>No shrub of the field was yet on the earth, no plant of the field has yet sprung up – for God had not poured rain down upon the earth, and there was not a soul to till the soil -</p> <p>6</p> <p>Though a flow would emerge from the earth and water the surface of the soil.</p> <p>7</p> <p>Then God fashioned man – dust from the soil – and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, so that the man became a living being.</p> <p>8</p> <p>To the east, God planted a garden in Eden setting man there whom [God] had formed.</p>
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*all translations taken from the Women's commentary

Questions:

- What jumped out at you from the creation stories we just read?
- What does it mean to be created in God's image?
- Both stories tell us about the creation of man – what about these creation stories have to do with cultivating joy?
- Look at the imagery in the second story – how can we relive that moment repeatedly each day?

Lesson Three: Empathy & Cheshbon HaNefesh

Curricular EU

1. Mindfulness is an approach that can support and help develop effective Jewish educators.
2. A mindfulness approach enriched with Jewish content can provide Jewish educators with a foundation for self-reflection and an ongoing growth mindset.

Core Concepts for Cultivating Joy:

- Educators will explore role playing their way through empathy
- Educators will explore soul searching

Essential Questions:

- How can practicing listening serve as a way to hold space for another person?
- What are the ways mindful listening improving our mindfulness practice?
- Why does writing down what is happening in ourselves good “housekeeping”?

Learner Outcomes:

- Educators will understand how empathy works in mindful listening
- Educators will do the work to hold space for another person via mindful listening
- Educators will understand the value of souls searching through soul-workshopping
- Educators will know how to challenge themselves through soul-workshopping

Materials:

- Paper
- Pens
- Soul-workshopping sheets
- Soul study sheets
- Chairs

Program Schedule:

08:30 pm – 09:00 pm: Soul Study
09:00 pm – 09:30 pm: Soul Workshopping
09:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Empathy & Mindful Listening

Procedure & Script:

08:30 pm – 09:00 pm: Soul Study

- *Welcome back from our Havdalah service everyone, it was so beautiful to end Shabbat with you all. We are moving into a place of deeper exploration tonight. We are first going*

to start off with a soul study...which is like a text study with the same intention, only we are focusing on the soul rather than the words of Torah.

- Use text sheet attached for soul study

09:00 pm – 09:30 pm: Soul Workshopping

- *I hope you all enjoyed our different take on Torah study. Let's move into some soul searching. On the table you will see pens and worksheets for where we are going next. These worksheets are just the beginning to our soul-searching journeys and help us explore deeper the relationship with ourselves.*
- See attached worksheet for participants to use on their soul-searching journeys.
- *For the first three boxes, challenge yourself to write down if you became closer or lost touch with these relationships. PAUSE FOR EDUCATORS TO WRITE.*
- *For the second two boxes, ask yourself: "How can I be better? What's holding me back?" PAUSE FOR EDUCATORS TO WRITE.*
- *Finally, for the last box, write down your perspective on life. Really challenge yourself to think about what you want for yourself and look at the words you choose. PAUSE FOR EDUCATORS TO WRITE.*
- Questions:
 - What was hard or frustrating about taking a look at our relationships?
 - Were the roadblocks that were holding you back the same ones from our cultivating joy session? If so, why?
 - Were you able to write your perspective on life? Did that question challenge you in any way?

09:30 pm – 10:00 pm: Empathy & Mindful Listening

- *Prompt: Let's move into chevruta with our next activity: mindful listening. Mindful listening allows us to be present and further explore our responsibility to model authenticity. Each partner will have 6 minutes to talk about he or she would like. The other person is to remain silent and LISTEN. This activity is all about learning how to listen mindfully. Through listening mindfully, we can practice empathy. These mock conversations without interruption are meant to challenge you. Here are some tips for listening mindfully:*
 - Check in with yourself: How are you feeling listening to these positive responses?
 - SILENTLY OWN YOUR EMOTIONS. Whatever comes up: embarrassment, happiness, joy, empathy. Etc.
 - Feel present – not just be present. Let yourself feel your feet under you, relax your neck and jaw, notice your breathing.
 - Validate: shake your head, blink, smile.
- Tips for speaking mindfully:
 - Create and keep eye contact – even if the listener loses eye contact, remain settled

- Be present: be conscious and own the words that you chose. Remember, you are right where you need to be right now.
- Speak your truth: positive vibes, positive mind.
- Feel present: if at any time you are feeling nervous about speaking, clench your fist REAL tight and unclench slowly – the sensation will bring you back to the present moment.
- *Once your 6 mins is up (Emily will check in and say STOP), you are to remain silent. You can hug your partner, shake hands, but you are not to talk.*
- *We are then going to switch partners.*
- *Prompt: remaining silent, thank your partner again.*
 - Questions: What came up for you as a listener?
 - What came up for you as speaker?
 - How does listening help us become better leaders?
 - What are some of the ways we can work empathy into our own lives?
 - By giving people our full attention
 - By sharing our emotions while we connect with others
 - Responding appropriately to the concerns of others
 - By finding ways to lend a kind hand
- *Thank you for participating and diving in whole-heartedly. I would love to close this special session out with a blessing:*

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, עוֹשֶׂה מַעֲשֵׂה
בְּרֵאשִׁית.

Baruch atah Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, oseh maasei v'reishit.

We praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who makes the works of creation.

Soul Study Text Sheet

As the Holy One fills the entire world, so the soul fills the entire body. As the Holy One sees but is not seen, so the soul sees but is not seen. As the Holy One sustains the entire world, all of it, so the soul sustains the body. As the Holy One is pure, so the soul is pure. As the Holy One dwells in chambers that are the innermost, so the soul dwells in chambers that are innermost. [Talmud, Berkhhot 10a]

“Among the sages, some believed that the soul exists before the body, waiting for the birth of its human form. In a frequent metaphor, the body is that which houses the soul during life. The body is not, however, merely a housing. As much as the soul’s importance is stressed, the body is seen as having its own intrinsic value. In fact, the rabbis believed that both the body and the soul together will be resurrected in the end of days.” – Michael Strassfeld, *A Book of Life*

“You don’t have a soul. You are a soul. You have a body.” C.S. Lewis

“When I admire the wonders of a sunset or the beauty of the moon, my soul expands in the worship of the creator.” Mahatma Gandhi

“You have to grow from the inside out. None can teach you, none can make you spiritual. There is no other teacher but your own soul.” Swami Vivekananda

Questions

1. Which of these quotes resonates the most with you? Why?

Me and God

Me and My Relationships

Me and Myself

Losses

Wins

What is your perspective on Life?

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