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NURTURING A LIFETIME
OF VOLUNTEERING:

A TOOLKIT
FOR FAMILIES
VOLUNTEERING
TOGETHER

REPAIR
THE WORLD

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Section 1

NURTURING A LIFETIME OF VOLUNTEERING

INTRODUCTION

One value that was sewn into the stitching of our character at a very early age had to do with our responsibility to help others... We were expected to be of assistance to our neighbors... "Being neighborly"... was synonymous with being kind, friendly, and helpful to our neighbors and something that we were encouraged to do on a regular basis through firsthand experience. It was a bit like mandatory community service.

— BeNeca Ward, author of *3rd Generation Country, A Practical Guide To Raising Children With Great Values*

As parents, we dream that our children will be blessed with health, happiness and prosperity. We also hope that they will appreciate these blessings and actively seek to share them with others less fortunate. How can we teach our children from a young age to use their talents, privilege and curiosity to help others? How can we encourage them to move beyond caring solely for their immediate circle of family and friends, and also to care deeply about their extended community as well as people around the world whom they may never meet? How can we teach them humility and patience, as we encourage them to envision and work toward a world in which there is more equity and justice as a result of their efforts?

The Torah's seminal and oft-repeated charge to "remember that you were slaves in Egypt" offers important instruction about how we can teach our children these values, beliefs and behaviors. Our ancient history of oppression, followed ultimately by redemption, compels us to leverage our power and privilege and work with empathy and in partnership with vulnerable populations. We must dedicate our voices, our hands and our resources toward loosening the economic, social and political fetters that enslave others. This is not only our responsibility but also our obligation.

At multiple times during the yearly Torah cycle, as well as around Passover tables each year, we publicly read aloud the injunction to remember that we were slaves in Egypt. As parents, we hope that our children will hear and absorb the deeper meaning behind this message. But we also know that while speaking about fighting injustice is important, it's not enough. As Rabbi Shimon taught in the 3rd century, "it is not what one says, but rather what one does, that makes all the difference in the world."¹ Our efforts must thus go beyond just talking the talk; we ourselves must model what it looks like to strive for change by getting our hands dirty, volunteering alongside our children and reflecting with them about the joys, challenges and struggles that are inherent when working toward change.

¹ Pirkei Avot, 1:17

INTRODUCTION

WHO SHOULD USE THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is designed to be used by families who wish to convey the importance of volunteering through the lens of Jewish tradition, ritual and text. Using this toolkit does not require a strong background in Judaism—nor even for both partners in a family to be Jewish—as much as an appreciation of Jewish teachings as a rich source of wisdom about communal responsibility. Rooted in this context, this toolkit asserts that when parents participate in hands-on service with their children, in essence, “practic[ing] the volunteer commitments that they preach,” parental teaching becomes optimally effective.² As noted by Chertok and Gerstein et al. in *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report on Jewish Young Adults*, a regular commitment to unpaid service by young adults “appears to be a socially learned behavior influenced by parental modeling”; Jewish young adults, for example, who recall their parents volunteering frequently during their high school years are themselves more likely to volunteer regularly.³ Thus, actively engaging in service as a family when children are young can create “a habit likely to continue throughout the lifespan.”⁴

Chertok and Gerstein also found that for interfaith families, volunteering often serves as “an easily agreed upon and non-religious avenue for imparting compassion and a sense of moral responsibility to their children.”⁵ Volunteering can also bring disparate families together to connect around a shared sense of purpose and value.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE POWER OF SERVICE

This toolkit advocates for families to participate in specific type of service opportunities: those that are already established, direct and ongoing.

- *Already established*, meaning that the volunteer opportunity is driven by the host organization (rather than being designed and driven by families).
- *Direct*, meaning that families work face-to-face with others.
- *Ongoing*, meaning opportunities beyond episodic or one-time volunteering. While one-time volunteer opportunities may certainly prime the pump for a lifelong commitment to service, it is only through sustained and regular volunteering that children truly internalize the value of service as critical to their development as conscientious and engaged citizens.

When we participate in already established, direct and ongoing volunteer service, we may find our comfort levels challenged and our schedules disarranged. Yet these discomforts and inconveniences are precisely what help move us—some may even say *transform* us—precisely because they force us into uncomfortable and uncharted places from which we ultimately grow. This reminds us of another important lesson from Jewish history: the Rabbis taught that the Israelites *needed* to wander in the desert for 40 years after being released from slavery before entering the Promised Land so that they could be discomfited and thus truly transformed by the experience. Otherwise, they might have taken their redemption for granted and not have fully appreciated the end result. Similarly, when we face discomfort as volunteers, we are jostled into a deeper awareness of and appreciation for our own selves as well as others. Thus, as parents who wish to raise aware and engaged world citizens, we must model for our children a deep commitment to volunteering despite any initial discomfort or scheduling difficulties.

² Pancer S., & Pratt M. (1999). Social and family determinants of community service involvement in Canadian youth. In *Roots of Civic Identity: International Perspectives on Community Service and Activism in Youth*, ed. M. Yates, J. Youniss, pp. 32-55. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³ Chertok, F., Gerstein, J., Tobias, J., Rosin, S., & Boxer, M. (2011). *Volunteering + Values: A Repair the World Report on Jewish Young Adults*. New York: Repair the World. p.20.

⁴ *ibid.*, p.3

⁵ *ibid.*, p.20

INTRODUCTION

WHAT IS IN THIS TOOLKIT?

This toolkit is designed for parents who embrace the idea of volunteering as transformative but need support in creating a meaningful experience for their family. It consists of two complementary sections. The first, based on Repair the World's "Service that Matters" guidelines, will help families articulate why volunteering is important to them. It will also guide families in selecting an appropriate already established, direct and ongoing volunteer opportunity.

The second section of the toolkit consists of activities (mostly under 15 minutes in length and requiring few materials, if any) that will help families reflect on their service together. Reflection is a critical part of the volunteer experience—as critical, perhaps, as the hands-on component itself—because it allows parents and children to process together any questions, concerns or inspirations that may arise. Research shows that such processing contributes to volunteers' long-term commitment to service by validating their feelings and helping them connect lessons derived from service to their personal behavior and beliefs.⁶ Children especially need time to process these connections and benefit greatly from hearing their parents' ideas and thoughts about the same experience. Many of the reflection activities in the toolkit use Jewish values or texts as a starting point for discussion, which serve to further connect families to traditional Jewish ideas and practices.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT MOST EFFECTIVELY

In order to address different developmental needs, this toolkit exists in three versions, each tailored to one of the following age cohorts: 5-7 year olds, 8-11 year olds and 12-15 year olds. Families with children representing more than one cohort should review the corresponding toolkits to select the activities that make the most sense for their family.

Parents can then set a rough timeline for when to complete each session. It may be helpful to schedule these sessions at the same time each week, such as before Shabbat dinner on Friday night or on the first Sunday evening of each month.

Recognizing that a family's commitment to social justice is one commitment among many, the sessions are highly adaptable to families' interests, needs and time considerations. Each session indicates an approximate time allotment and sometimes includes options or extension activities. Most of the activities can be adapted to be done at mealtimes, in the car, at bedtime, or whenever families have time together to talk and think more deeply about the important volunteer service that they are doing together. While there are many opportunities within the toolkit to document family conversations, some families may wish to also share their insights and experiences using social media.

What is "Volunteering" and "Service" Anyway?

In this toolkit the terms "volunteering" and "service" are often used interchangeably or in tandem to refer to the ways in which we use our talents, resources and time to help others in a humble and respectful way. Volunteering or service can take a variety of forms. It can include doing unpaid work, raising funds or holding a drive. It can take place at home or at an established organization. Above all, it entails putting others before ourselves and thinking about how we can pursue greater justice in this world.

⁶ Butler University Volunteer Center. Homepage. 17 July 2012. <<http://www.butler.edu/volunteer/resources/reflection-resources/#Why%20is%20reflection%20important>>.

INTRODUCTION

Though most of the activities are designed for families to do together, on occasion, advance work by parents is required. This generally occurs when an adult must confirm logistics with an organization, which is a conversation most easily had between two adults on the phone or over e-mail (rather than with the entire family present).

Families may wish to expand and enrich their experience by inviting another family or two to join them on this journey. Partnering with other families similarly committed to working toward social justice will not only help share the planning load, but will also give children additional adult role models as well as peers with whom they can grow in service.

As Pirkei Avot memorably pronounced: "You are not required to finish the task, but neither are you free to ignore it."⁷ Your family—in partnership with others in your local community and beyond—is taking an important step on the long road toward justice. *B'hatzlacha*—we wish you great success! May your hands be strong, your heart full, your mind clear and your service impactful.

⁷ Pirkei Avot, 2:21.

Unit 1

WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OUR FAMILY, TO JUDAISM AND TO ME?

To fully appreciate their role as volunteers, families must first explore and articulate what motivates them to volunteer. This section of the toolkit offers three lenses through which to examine these motivations:

- The first section allows parents and children to explore their family's relationship to and experience with volunteering, as well as those of their relatives and close friends.
- The second section uses the wider lens of the Jewish family to help families explore what Judaism teaches about helping others through volunteer work.
- Finally, in the third section, each family member examines his or her personal motivations for volunteering.

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

OUR FAMILY'S VOLUNTEERING VALUES

Before beginning the process of selecting a volunteer opportunity, take time to discuss why volunteering is important to your family.

STEP 1:

Explain to your child that you will soon start volunteering together as a family. Before deciding where to volunteer, however, you first want to talk about what volunteering is and why it is important to your family.

STEP 2:

Ask your child:

- What does it mean to volunteer? (to willingly do something without receiving money for it)
- Where have you volunteered before (helping at a school fundraiser, serving as a "reading buddy" or making cards for elderly neighbors)? How did it feel to help someone else?

STEP 3:

Share with your child:

- Your first memory of volunteering.
- The last time you volunteered. Where and why did you volunteer? What did it feel like? What did you learn from the experience?
- Ways in which your parents, other relatives and family friends volunteered in their communities. This might include being part of a fraternal or religious organization, visiting sick friends in the hospital, volunteering at a food bank or helping a new immigrant learn English. Be sure to explain how volunteering allowed them to express values that were important to them, such as the importance of hospitality, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick or welcoming new immigrants.
- Ways in which you yourself may have benefited from the service of a volunteer (i.e., by being the beneficiary of a tutoring service or receiving meals from others when you had a new baby).
- How Judaism (or another religious tradition) informs your sense of the importance of volunteering.
- Why you believe that it is important that you volunteer as a family.

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

JUDAISM'S VOLUNTEERING VALUES

Judaism has much to say about the importance of taking care of others. By exploring traditional and contemporary Jewish ideas that relate to this value, you can anchor volunteering in an even bigger family tree: that of the Jewish people.

STEP 1:

Explain to your child that the Torah [the Five Books of Moses] has many laws about how people should treat each other nicely and with respect.

STEP 2:

Read the following sentence to your child:

One of the most important passages in the Torah is the mitzvah (commandment) to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Leviticus 19:18).

STEP 3:

Ask your child:

- What do you think it means to "love your neighbor as yourself"? Do you think this passage is speaking about your actual neighbor, or could the neighbor be someone who lives far away from you?
- What does it look like when you "love your neighbor as yourself"?
- How can we as a family practice loving our neighbors as ourselves? How is volunteering a way for us to practice loving our neighbors?
- Why do you think the Torah teaches us that we should love our neighbors as ourselves?

Studying Jewish Texts:

If your family has never studied Jewish texts before, have no fear! In the context of this toolkit, Jewish texts are offered as springboards for conversation. You need not be a Torah scholar to find meaning in them and offer your own valid and valuable response to the ideas that they raise. Try this three-step approach to reading Jewish texts in this toolkit:

1. Read the text to yourself and/or aloud with a partner. On the first reading, consider the text's surface meaning. What do the words mean? Can you repeat them in your own words? Note that although the language of the texts in this toolkit has been simplified for children's comprehension, you may nonetheless wish to define further or paraphrase sections of the text for your child.
2. Reexamine the text a second time, this time exploring what you think it is trying to teach or convey. What values does it uphold? What unspoken assumptions might it be making? Where might you agree or disagree?
3. Use the discussion questions following each text to stimulate thought and dialogue among members of your family. Remember that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers; Judaism deeply esteems conversation and debate over answers.

Note: While the texts included in this toolkit are primarily Jewish in origin, if your family is informed by other religious traditions, feel free to include other meaningful texts that will help further connect your family to service.

UNIT 1: WHAT IS VOLUNTEERING? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO OUR FAMILY, TO JUDAISM AND TO ME?**STEP 4:**

Have your child act out different ways through which people might demonstrate loving their neighbors as themselves. Offer the following scenarios:

- An elderly neighbor down the street breaks her wrist and is unable to cook for two weeks.
- A new student arrives in your class midway through the year.
- Heavy rains cause flooding in the county next to yours and some families are unable to return to their homes until the water goes down.

STEP 5:

Discuss: Select one way this week that your family can actively practice loving your neighbors.

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

MY VOLUNTEERING VALUES

After exploring the values that inspire your family and friends to volunteer as well as Judaism's perspective on service, consider your own volunteering values. We each volunteer for different reasons. Why do you volunteer?

STEP 1:

Review and discuss with your child some of the reasons why people volunteer, including:

- To make the world a better place
- Because other people need my help
- Because Judaism teaches that we should
- Because it feels good
- Because it is something that my family and friends do, so I do too
- Because the issue I volunteer on is important to me
- Because it is required (by school, for example)

STEP 2:

In the space below, have your child illustrate one of the reasons for volunteering that he or she finds particularly meaningful. If your child does not like to draw, you can write down one of the responses and have your child decorate it with stickers.



Unit 2

IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

Congratulations! After discussing the values that your family, Jewish tradition and you yourself hold with regard to volunteering, your family can now begin to explore suitable volunteer opportunities in your community.

Although it might seem easier as a parent to decide on your own where your family will volunteer, by involving your child in the decision-making process, you will expose him or her to the myriad of social issues that exist, as well as the difficult reality that we cannot help everyone who needs it. These lessons, although frustrating at times, are important to discuss with children even at a young age and will contribute to a more robust volunteer experience together.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 30 MINUTES)
CAN ALSO BE BROKEN INTO SMALLER SEGMENTS

WHERE AND WHAT TYPE OF HELP IS NEEDED?

Finding an organization where your family can volunteer can be eye opening: in your research you are sure to find that there is much need in the world and many people working to effect change. This realization can also be overwhelming; if there is so much need and so many ways to help, where can your family fit in? The activities below will help bring these tensions to light so that you can discuss them as a family as you select the best volunteer opportunity for you.

STEP 1:

Parent Homework: In advance, parents should identify two to three local organizations that offer already established, direct and ongoing volunteer service opportunities for families with children between 5-7 years of age. Possible opportunities may include:

- Visiting elderly neighbors, such as through an "adopt a grandparent" program
- Delivering meals to or running errands for homebound individuals
- Helping at a community garden

STEP 2:

Discuss with your child the fact that there some people in the world are less fortunate than your family. For example, they may not have enough money, enough food, enough toys or a decent home in which to live. Your child may be familiar with these ideas from having witnessed it personally, learning about it on television: or through conversations at school.

Ask: What do you think we do to help? Expect answers such as give money, give food, give toys, or build houses. If your child does not mention it, bring up volunteering as another important way to help people. Through volunteering, we can do more than just give someone an object; we can also support them by giving of our time.

Why Not Create Our Own Project?

Families seeking to help may be inclined to develop their own project or fundraiser to benefit a cause. While this intention is honorable and understandable, this toolkit specifically encourages families to volunteer in an existing organization in order to expose them to the inner workings of a non-profit and allow them to use their time in a way that expressly benefits an organization. Additionally, this process helps teach children the important lesson that we must help others in the way that they wish to be helped, rather than in a way that is convenient or pleasing to us.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

STEP 3:

Discuss Volunteer Opportunities at Local Organizations

Explain that there are many groups that help people who are in need in your community. Show your child the two to three websites of the organizations you researched. Review the following information about each with your child:

- The organization's name
- The population they work with/issue they work on
- What they do
- Why they do this work
- What the organization needs volunteers, such as your family, to do

As you review each organization, discuss: How do you think you (as a child) and we (as a family) would be able to help this organization by volunteering?

Parent Tips:

- Expect thoughtful questions from your children about the organizations and issues. Do not be afraid to tell your children if you do not know the answer. Rather, let them know that they are asking good questions and take note of them for later.
- While volunteering is an important way to address a social issue, one family's volunteer time cannot solve a problem. Discuss this reality with you child and discuss why it still remains important to volunteer.
- Be mindful of your child's attention span; in order to get through two or three organizations' websites and retain interest, pace the conversation appropriately. Do not worry about going too in depth about each organization and issue; offer explanations that resonate with your child's comprehension level and attention.
- If you have more than one child in this age range, you may choose to sit with each at the computer separately in order to give each child attention and time to ask questions.
- If the volunteer opportunities that you have researched and presented are not your child's first choice, remind him that it is important to help others in the ways they want to be helped. Ask him to think of a time when someone "helped" him in a way that wasn't actually that helpful to him. Was it really helpful in that case? Or did it actually cause more problems than good?

Searching Online for Family Volunteer Opportunities

The following sites may offer already established, ongoing and direct volunteer service opportunities in your community. You may also try an Internet search by entering "family volunteer opportunities [name of your city]" into your search engine.

Association of Jewish Family and Children's Agencies:
www.ajfca.org

Doing Good Together:
www.doinggoodtogether.org

Idealist.org:
www.idealist.org

Serve.gov:
www.serve.gov

United Way:
www.unitedway.org

The Volunteer Family:
www.thevolunteerfamily.org

Volunteer Match:
www.volunteermatch.org

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

STEP 4:

Select an Organization

As a family, select the organization whose volunteer opportunity resonates best. Be sure to have a backup organization in mind in case the first organization cannot accommodate your family after all.

STEP 5:

Parent Homework: Contact and Confirm with the Organization

Contact the organization that your family identified to see if they would indeed benefit from your family volunteering with them. Respectfully state your offer to volunteer and be prepared to adjust your proposal in order to best fit its needs.

In your conversation, be sure to touch on the following:

- Phone and e-mail address of your main contact at the organization
.....
- Your family's responsibilities as volunteers
.....
- When you will volunteer (day of week and time of day) and how often
.....
- The timeframe of your commitment (including start and end date, if applicable)
.....
- When and where you will receive an orientation
.....
- How you will get to the site where you will volunteer (if applicable)
.....
- Whether you need to bring any supplies, dress in a certain way, etc.
.....
- Other relevant information to relay to your family
.....

At the end of the call, be sure to thank the organization again.

Children's Books with Social Themes:

Many parents find children's books helpful to contextualize social issues such as hunger, poverty and the environment. To find these books, both fiction and non-fiction, visit your local library or type "children's books [name of a social issue]" into a web browser. The Association of Jewish Libraries' Values Finder website (<http://www.jewishlibraries.org/main/Resources/AJLValuesfinder.aspx>) offers a searchable database of Jewish children's books related to values and social justice issues.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

LOGISTICS, LOGISTICS

After you have confirmed that your family will be volunteering with an organization, review the basic details of your volunteering together, in order to get your child excited and engaged.

STEP 1:

Tell your child about the organization that you will be volunteering with as a family. Be sure to mention:

- The name of the organization
- What the organization does
- What you will be doing as a volunteer there
- When you will begin volunteering

STEP 2:

Discuss with your child what he or she is excited about the volunteer experience. Also speak about why it might be exciting for the organization to have your family volunteer with them.

UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 8 MINUTES)

OUR HOPES AND DREAMS

As with any new beginning, starting as a new volunteer brings with it many hopes and some anxieties. It is important to take time to discuss these hopes, dreams and concerns as a family.

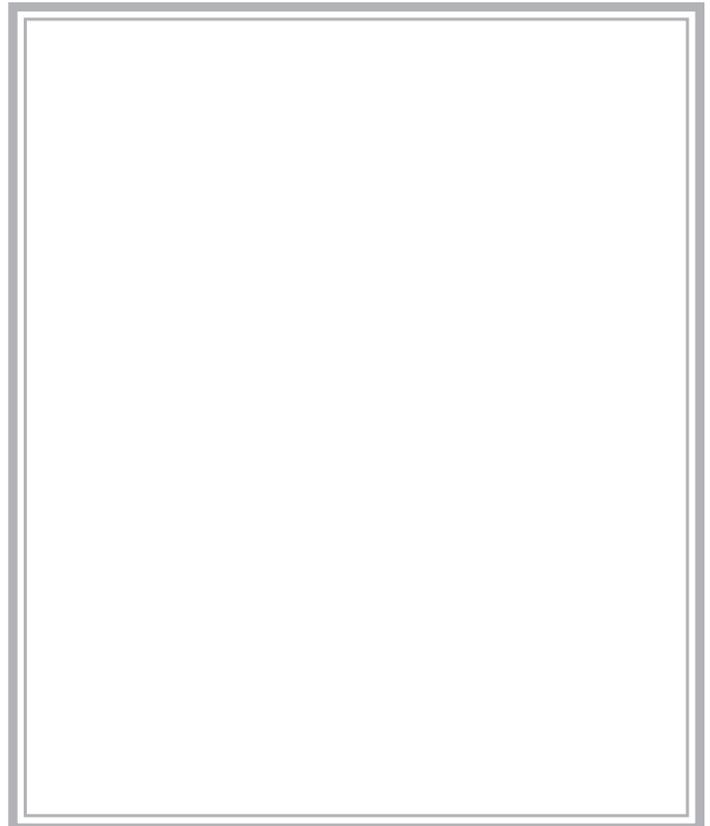
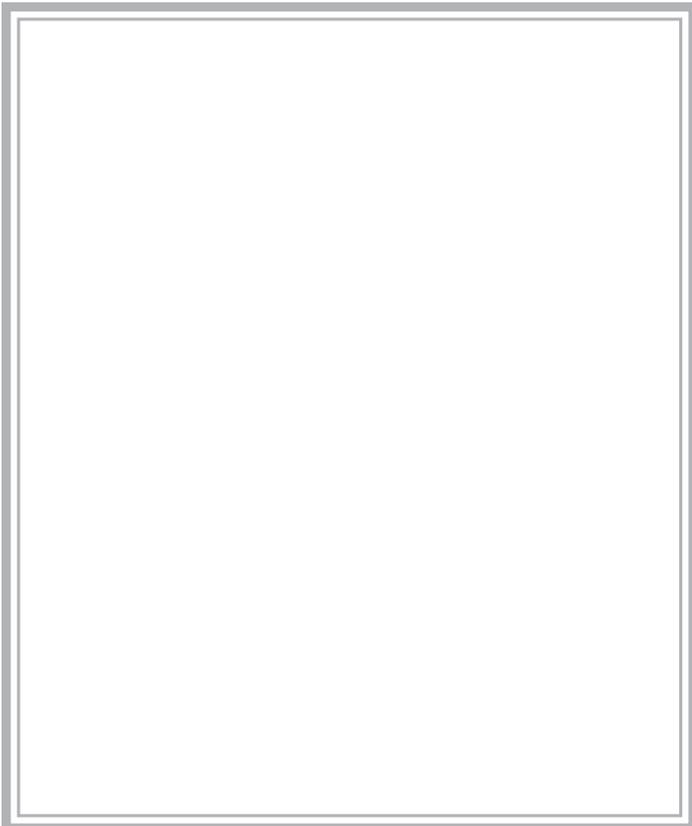
STEP 1:

Ask your child:

- What do you hope to learn through our service? What are you looking forward to?
- What, if anything, are you worried about? What questions do you still have?

STEP 2:

Using the space below, on the left side of the page have your child draw an image of your family volunteering from his or her imagination. On the right side of the page, have your child draw a picture of something he or she has a question about concerning volunteering. Review the drawing together to discuss these hopes, dreams and possible concerns.



UNIT 2: IDENTIFYING A FAMILY VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

MAKING A COMMITMENT

In Judaism, one marks a wholehearted commitment to and expectations of another through a brit, or holy contract. By writing a family brit that states your family's commitment to the organization that you will be working with, you model for your children the importance of taking your commitments seriously, especially—and even—when one is volunteering without expectation of pay or external reward.

Materials: Paper, markers, stamps or stickers (optional)

STEP 1:

Use the template below to create your own family brit. You may wish to have your child decorate the brit with markers, stamps and stickers.

OUR BRIT—THE COMMITMENT WE MAKE

Our family believes that it is important to volunteer because:

Because of this, we agree to:

We are excited to help and learn from others, and work together to make the world a better place.

Signed,

STEP 2:

Share the brit with a relative, teacher or rabbi in order to help hold your family accountable. Place it in a prominent place in your home. You may even choose to frame it.

Mazal tov! You are now ready to begin your volunteer service! Turn to page XX to find “Reflecting on Your Volunteer Service as a Family” for activities that will help enrich and deepen your family's experience before, during and after your volunteer service.

Section 2

REFLECTING ON YOUR VOLUNTEER SERVICE AS A FAMILY

INTRODUCTION

Follow effective action with quiet reflection. From the quiet reflection will come even more effective action.

—James Levin

When we take time to reflect upon an experience—to consider how it felt, what it meant and how it may have challenged us—we not only better understand the experience but also discover important lessons to apply to our lives in the future. Reflection thus allows us to nurture our sense of wonder, test our assumptions, open our minds to new ideas and clarify our values.

Judaism also encourages continual reflection as a way to raise our awareness and participate more fully in the world. We read the same Torah stories year after year in order to mine our shared historical narrative for new meaning and relevance. On the High Holidays, we reflect as individuals and as a community on our actions over the past year to consider how we can do better in the year to come. Mussar, a Jewish ethical, educational and cultural movement that developed in 19th century and has seen resurgence in the 21st century, encourages us to notice how we practice certain virtues (such as listening or equanimity) in order to become more ethical, balanced and self-aware individuals.

REFLECTING AS A FAMILY

In our busy world today, making time to pause and reflect can prove to be admittedly challenging. However, as parents who hope to raise children who not only know themselves but also appreciate the amazing world in which they live, we must cultivate in ourselves and in them the habit of regular reflection. As parents, we can model this habit by both reflecting in front of our children as well as alongside them.

Modeling reflection is particularly important when volunteering with children. While the experience of volunteering is itself powerful, in order to concretize the experience, unravel any assumptions or anxieties, and encourage children to appreciate the enduring power of service in their lives, we must reflect with them. We must share our observations, discuss our feelings about our volunteer work, talk about what it meant to us—or how it fell short of our expectations—and discuss its impact upon us. By doing so, we teach not only the importance of reflection writ large, but also discrete skills—such as critical thinking, the ability to observe objectively and thoughtful analysis—which are powerful tools that children can apply to many other areas of their lives.

THE ARC OF THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

To assist your family in reflection, this toolkit presents activities in six subsections designed to correlate and respond to the anticipated arc of your family's volunteering experience: before, during and at its conclusion.

- The first section, "Beginning with the End in Mind," offers ways to document the volunteer experience from the outset until its end.
- The second section, "Volunteering as Sacred Time," provides ideas to ground volunteering in Jewish tradition and ritual.

INTRODUCTION

- “Nurturing the Qualities of a Good Volunteer,” the third section, can be used before volunteering. Activities in this section will help families practice important skills including honoring others, listening to others, and being a good guest at the host organization.
- In the fourth section, “Integrating the Volunteer Experience as a Family,” families will consider how to process and share their experiences as volunteers with empathy, dignity and humility.
- The fifth section addresses the challenging but not insurmountable issue of “When Things Don’t Go the Way We Expect.” These activities are designed to respond to common challenges for volunteers, such as when something uncomfortable occurs in the volunteer setting.
- In the sixth section, “Continuing Our Impact,” families consider ways to leverage their resources to further the cause of the organization with which they have volunteered.
- “Celebrating and Expressing Appreciation: Concluding the Volunteer Experience,” the final section, helps families close their volunteer experience in a meaningful way.

The activities, which vary in structure, are generally under 20 minutes. They can be done at home, while walking to school, in the car, at mealtimes, or before bed. They may be used in the order presented or in any order that best speaks to your family’s experience.

Finally, while these reflections help support families before, during and at the close of formal volunteering, families are encouraged to continue to reflect upon the experience and its impact long after completing volunteering at any particular site. In fact, you may find it helpful to return to some of the activities long after completing your volunteering, in order to address an important related question raised by a member of your family.

CREATING SPACE FOR REFLECTION

This section offers many activities and texts to spur conversation and reflection. Key to the activities’ success, however, is the existence of a safe, respectful and open atmosphere in which all members of the family feel comfortable offering their thoughts and feelings. In order to create such space for reflection:

- 1) Indicate that your time together as a family, thinking about and discussing the volunteer experience is, “safe space” in which no one will be judged.
- 2) Approach conversations from a stance of “appreciative inquiry,” in which judgment is not pronounced but rather questions are asked to further understand another’s point of view. Statements starting with “What do you mean when you say...?,” “Can you say more about...?” and “I wonder...” reflect a stance of appreciative inquiry.
- 3) Ensure that everyone has a chance to contribute to the discussion, not just the members of your family who find that reflection and sharing come easily.
- 4) Remember that for some members of your family, reflection through art, acting or writing might come more easily than through conversation or discussion. If so, create space for such forms of reflection.
- 5) Acknowledge and embrace quiet moments during sharing. It is often during quiet times in the company of others that we do our best thinking.

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REFLECTION IN THREE STEPS

Though the activities provided are designed to provoke thoughtful response and conversation, you can reflect with your family about any issue at any time using these three lenses:

- 1) **Wide Angle:** Consider the *big picture* of your experience. For example, if you are working at a soup kitchen, you might reflect on the issue of hunger and why there are hungry people even though there is more than enough food for everyone on the planet.
- 2) **Microscope:** Think about the *details* of your experience. If you are working at a soup kitchen, you might reflect on how the organization you are working with tackles hunger and how you can support their efforts.
- 3) **Mirror:** Think about *your own actions, beliefs and feelings*. If you are working at a soup kitchen, reflect on how you might feel if you were hungry and needed help, or think about how you may yourself contribute to the problem or solution of hunger in your community.¹

¹Ways to Reflect. PDF. 20 July 2012. <<http://www.cms.k12.nc.us/parents/charactered/Documents/WaystoReflect.pdf>>.

Unit 1

BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

Judaism pays close attention to the passage of time. We mark the ending and beginning of the week with Shabbat and Havdallah; the start of each new month on Rosh Hodesh with special prayers; and the beginning of the new year at Rosh Hashanah with reflection and celebration. Similarly, your family may wish to consciously mark your time as volunteers in special ways. Not only will this help you look forward, but it will also allow you to return at the end of your service to a record of where you were at the beginning.

UNIT 1: BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

ACTIVITY #1

A VOLUNTEER CALENDAR

To mark your volunteer time as a family, use an academic calendar or a printed Jewish calendar, which many synagogues distribute without charge in the fall. You can also go to www.hebc.com for a downloadable Jewish calendar.

Mark your volunteer calendar with volunteering milestones:

- The date of your first family conversation about volunteering
- The date you confirmed your volunteer site
- The date of your volunteer orientation
- The date of your first family reflection
- Your first day volunteering
- Other important dates to your family

Younger children might decorate the calendar, while older children might be assigned the task of keeping track of important upcoming events.

At the end of your volunteering, return to this physical record to note your progress and growth.

UNIT 1: BEGINNING WITH THE END IN MIND

ACTIVITY #2

CREATING A VISUAL KEEPSAKE

Some families may find it meaningful to mark the volunteer experience through photographs.

As a family, discuss how you might use photographs to document your volunteering. At its conclusion, you may wish to create a photographic memory book using an online site.

The Power—Positive and Negative—of Photography:

While photography is a powerful mode of expression, if used inappropriately, it can cause harm. Keep in mind the following considerations when taking photos as a volunteer:

- Only take photographs with the express permission of the organization and any people whom you may photograph.
- Do not use the photographs for any reason other than for personal use.
- Do not post photographs of other people online or publicly without their permission.
- Be wary of hiding behind the camera; it can serve as a barrier to developing an authentic personal relationship with the people with whom you volunteer.
- Be careful not to over-photograph a scene.
- Be discrete when photographing.
- When photographing yourself or your child, consider how to frame the scene such that you or your child are not portrayed as the “hero” of the shot but rather as an equal participant. For example, if your family is bringing meals to an elderly person, consider taking a photo of your child holding hands with the elder rather than serving him or her a meal.
- Do not bring your camera into any situation where it would radically shift dynamics and call greater attention to extant inequities (for example, by bringing an expensive camera into a homeless shelter).

Unit 2

VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

By grounding volunteer service in Jewish tradition and ritual, it becomes connected to sacred Jewish values and becomes holy work.

UNIT 2: VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 2 MINUTES)

OFFERING GRATITUDE FOR NEW BEGINNINGS

In Jewish tradition, new beginnings are marked by the recitation of the *shehecheyanu*, through which we offer gratitude for having reached the occasion of starting something new.

Recite the *shehecheyanu* as a family before beginning volunteering for the first time to frame your new experience Jewishly and celebrate it together.

HEBREW TEXT

Transliteration:

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, shecheyanu v'kiy'manu v'higyanu lazman hazeh.

Translation:

Blessed are You, Sovereign of the Universe, for giving us life, sustaining us and allowing us to reach this day.

UNIT 2: VOLUNTEERING AS SACRED TIME

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

CREATING A FAMILY KAVANA (INTENTION)

The word *kavana*, or intention, comes from the Hebrew root meaning "to aim." Before prayer, many Jews offer a *kavana* (plural: *kavanot*) in order to aim their hearts in a prayerful direction and more deeply connect to the moment.

As a family, write a *kavana* to recite together each time before volunteering. The *kavana* can take the form of a blessing or a mantra.

When crafting your *kavana* together, consider:

- What are we "aiming for" as volunteers?

- Where do we wish to direct our hearts as we volunteer?

- What are our hopes and aspirations as volunteers?

Write down your family *kavana* and recite it together each time before volunteering.

If preferred, you may also use one of the following *kavanot*:

- Divine One, open our hearts and strengthen our hands as we volunteer today.
- Keep an open mind, an open heart and open hands.
- Be curious, be present, be kind.

Unit 3

NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

The activities in this section highlight important qualities and skills for families—parents and children alike—to consider and practice before volunteering. These qualities include:

- Honoring Others
- Listening to Others
- Greeting All with a Beautiful Face
- Being a Good Guest

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

HONORING OTHERS: *MECHABEYD ZEH ET ZEH*

Judaism teaches that the value of *mechabeyd zeh et zeh*—honoring others—is fundamental to powerful human connection. In a volunteer setting, honoring others is integral to a positive experience for both those serving and those being served.

STEP 1:

Read to your child the following statement, commonly known as the Golden Rule:

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- What does it look like when you treat others the way you want to be treated?
- What does it feel like when you treat others as you want to be treated?
- What does it feel like when others treat you the way you want to be treated?
- As volunteers, how can we treat others the way we would want to be treated?

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 2 MINUTES PER ROUND)

LISTENING TO OTHERS: SHMIYAT HA'OZEN

A powerful way to show honor to others is by listening well to others, which in Hebrew is called *shmiyat ha'ozen*. Use these activities to help practice the skill of good listening.

STEP 1:

Play the following game, which requires good listening:

1. Have one family member choose an object and describe it with as much detail as possible without actually naming it.
2. The others listen and try to imagine what the object is, and then try to guess.
3. Play a few rounds so that everyone has a turn describing an object.

STEP 2:

After playing a few rounds, discuss what you as a listener needed to do to identify the object correctly. Note that as a listener, you had to listen—to really pay attention—and not just hear what the other person was saying.

STEP 3:

Explain that good volunteers need to practice good listening as well.

Ask:

- Who do you think we will need to listen to when we volunteer? (staff members, other volunteers, the people for whom you will be volunteering?)
- Why is it important that we listen to these people? (to show respect, to be present, to properly do what is expected of us)
- How do you think other people will feel when we listen and pay attention to them?

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

**GREETING ALL WITH A BEAUTIFUL FACE:
SAYVER PANIM YAFOT**

Upon entering any new situation, especially as a volunteer, it is important to start off right by greeting all with a pleasant demeanor.

STEP 1:

Ask your child:

- When you go somewhere for the first time, such as school or camp, what are you excited about? What might you be worried about?
- How do other people help you feel more comfortable when you are new? (coming over to you, saying hello, smiling)

STEP 2:

As a family, take turns acting out the following friendly gestures to use when entering a new situation:

- Shaking hands
- Nodding hello
- Saying hello
- Making eye contact
- Waving
- Smiling
- Looking around with interest (not staring)
- Paying attention when someone else is speaking
- Any additional suggestions you or your child offers

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER**STEP 3:**

Read to your child the following text from Pirkei Avot, a collection of rabbinic teachings from the third century CE:

Greet all people with a beautiful face.

—Pirkei Avot, 1:15

STEP 4:

Ask: What does this statement mean? As volunteers, when we enter an organization, how can we greet others with a “beautiful face” so that we can show them how excited we are to be there and help out?

UNIT 3: NURTURING THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD VOLUNTEER

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

BEING A GOOD GUEST

Volunteers must remember that despite any sacrifices they might be making in order to volunteer, the host organization also often sacrifices staff time and organizational resources to support volunteers. Therefore, as guests—albeit ones intending to help—volunteers must prioritize the needs of the organization and seek to be good guests when they serve. The following activity will help families discuss how to be good guests as volunteers.

STEP 1:

Ask your child:

- When friends come over, what do they do that is polite and makes you want to invite them over again? (using good manners, being respectful of your toys, speaking in an inside voice)
- When friends visit, what kinds of behavior hurt your feelings or make you not want you to invite them over again? (not cleaning up after themselves, taking things without asking, being bossy)
- When we volunteer, we are guests at the organization. What should we do or not do to behave like good guests?

STEP 2:

Take turns acting out a few examples of behavior that reflect a “good guest” and a “bad guest.” Don’t be afraid to be a little silly!

Unit 4

INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

The activities in this section will help families process and share what they observe and encounter during their volunteer experience.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

SERVICE AND OUR SENSES: A REFLECTION AFTER THE FIRST TIME VOLUNTEERING

Upon entering a new service setting, new sights, sounds and smells may greet you. As a family, use this post-service reflection to recall some of the new things that you encountered during your first time volunteering.

STEP 1:

Ask your child:

- What is one thing that you saw while volunteering?
- What is one thing that you smelled while volunteering?
- What is one thing that you heard while volunteering?
- What is one new thing or object that you touched while volunteering?
- Did any of these things feel familiar to you? Different and new?

STEP 2:

Have your child draw in the space below what he or she saw, smelled, heard and touched while volunteering.



UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

CULTIVATING EMPATHY

Empathy—seeing the world from another’s perspective with compassion and understanding—is critical for healthy human relationships. By practicing empathy, volunteers—especially those who work with people from dissimilar backgrounds—can find meaningful connection.

STEP 1:

Read as a family the following adage from Rabbi Hillel, who lived and taught in the 1st century BCE:

Do not judge [think you know what someone else is feeling or thinking] your friend until you are in his place.
–Pirkei Avot, 2:4

STEP 2:

Discuss:

- In your own words, what is Rabbi Hillel saying?
- Can you really be in someone else’s place? Can you really know what it feels like to be someone else?
- How can remembering what Rabbi Hillel taught us help us as we volunteer?

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #3

THE POWER OF STORYTELLING

We live in a world of stories. We read them in religious and secular contexts, impart them to our children and tell them daily to our friends, partners, colleagues and ourselves. Professor Bruce Jackson, writing in *The Antioch Review*, explains that stories are powerful mechanisms of communication because:

Ordinary life is disorderly, cluttered, and full of things that don't seem to make a great deal of sense. It's in our stories that things make sense. Stories are how we know things and how we remember them... We organize the events of our lives in terms of these narratives. These stories are not just file cabinets or movies of ordinary life; they are also the devices with which we explain and justify ourselves to ourselves and to others.²

Rabbi Will Berkovitz, writing from a religious as well as anthropological perspective, asserts that the very act of listening to and telling stories is holy. As he writes:

Many of the holiest moments in life are not found in churches or synagogues or in the cloistered study of sacred literature. No, the sacred moments that sustain and bind us together are the sharing of our common humanity through simple encounter – the telling and hearing of our stories, the passing along of our experiences.

Moreover, asserting that “everyone has a story to tell and deserves to tell it,” Berkovitz continues:

The telling and hearing our stories is a rare instance of a gift given and received in two directions – at once an act of solidarity and reciprocity. It knits together the fabric of our separate lives into a common tapestry. We are taught at an early age not to talk to strangers, but often we keep people as strangers when we could be building relationships.³

Sharing stories is certainly important and has the potential to be holy, community-building work. Yet much depends on how we tell stories about others and retell others' stories. Since we tend to tell stories from our own perspective, when we tell stories that feature other people or stories in which other people are protagonists, we run the risk of unintentionally misrepresenting them. As volunteers who may be working with less privileged populations, this dynamic can be particularly tenuous and problematic. For example, many volunteers inadvertently portray themselves as self-sacrificing heroes and the individuals with whom they volunteer as dependent or weak. In other cases, not fully understanding the culture of the other person in the story can cause volunteers to inadvertently pass judgment on others' actions.

² Jackson, Bruce. "The Stories People Tell." *Antioch Review* 55.3 (1997): 605-320. Academic Search Premier. Roosevelt U. Lib., Chicago. 8 Feb. 2007 <http://search.ebscohost.com/> p.305.

³ Huffington Post. The Priest and the Prostitute: Storytelling as a Gift to God. 29 July 2012. <http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rabbi-will-berkovitz/storytelling-gift-to-god_b_1166538.html>.

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

Take for example, the following blog post by a college student who volunteered in Africa for eight months:

Let's start at the beginning. As I was sitting on the plane from Addis Ababa to Douala... my first interaction with a Cameroonian ended in a proposal... a wedding proposal that is. And since then? I guess I've had about a handful of chances to marry some random Cameroonian men, but am sorry to report that this girl is not yet engaged. And it seems that whenever I talk to men in Cameroon I get the chance to share that I feel I am too young to think of marriage, kids, and yes I already know that if we had babies together they would be a beautiful mixed caramel color... Sometimes it can be hard when my roommate and I walk to the supermarket and get yelled at in every direction, but I also have found that personally these people aren't here to make us upset or scared, they just think it's pretty weird that two young and pale white girls are walking to a supermarket in the middle of Douala, a place without much tourism and the only diversity coming from neighboring countries or the few old American or European men that are here on business. As Mama Simone would tell me, they are just yelling at you because they think you're beautiful! Although, I have to say I don't think after sweating in the hot and humid weather all day after taking care of a bunch of kids who wipe their noses all over me and maybe having running water that day to take a shower—actually deserves any recognition whatsoever, but I guess I'll take the compliment...⁴

Though undoubtedly written with the best intentions in mind, this blogger reveals some negative and naïve impressions about Cameroon and the people with whom she volunteered for eight months.

Her blog post demonstrates that when we tell stories about other people, we quickly create images and ideas about those people in others' minds—images and ideas that can be helpful or harmful. We are therefore obligated to consider thoughtfully how we tell stories that represent the people with whom we volunteer with dignity, honor and sensitivity.

This toolkit certainly does not seek to discourage volunteers from telling stories about their experiences to others; in fact, story-telling, in addition to creating connection between human beings, is a critically important way of motivating others to join and do good work themselves. Rather, when telling stories, families must consider how they speak about others with dignity and respect—in other words, in the way they themselves would want to be treated and spoken about.

⁴ Words Across the Universe. 29 July 2012. <<http://wordscrosstheuniverse.blogspot.com/>>.

ACTIVITY #4

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

SHARING THE STORY OF OUR VOLUNTEERING WITH OTHERS

By considering what it feels like when people tell stories about us, we can better sensitize ourselves to how we speak about others.

STEP 1:

Tell a story about your child to your child but do not let him or her respond at first.

STEP 2:

Ask your child:

- Did you agree with the way I told the story?
- How did it feel hearing me tell a story about you?
- Is there anything about the way I told the story that you would change?
- How do you think other people might feel when we tell stories about them?

STEP 3:

Have your child tell a story about you to you and then reflect on the points above.

Another Perspective:

There are many children's books that retell classic fairy tale stories from the perspective of a supporting character. Read one to your child (for example, *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka) and reflect together on how the story feels different when told from a different character's perspective. Is the story any less "true" when told from another character's perspective? How do you think differently about the story when you hear it from another point of view?

UNIT 4: INTEGRATING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE AS A FAMILY

ACTIVITY #5

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

BEING A HUMBLE VOLUNTEER

When we volunteer, it is easy to feel good about ourselves—to pat ourselves on the back and feel self-satisfied. However, Jewish tradition reminds us to treasure humility in our interactions with other people, remaining aware that there is always something to learn from others and always room for us to grow.

STEP 1:

Explain that when we help someone else, it feels good, and understandably, we may want to tell other people how good it feels. However, when telling other people about our volunteering, we need to be careful not to brag about how helpful we are.

STEP 2:

Take turns role-playing bragging about being good and helpful.

STEP 3:

After role-playing, discuss:

- Why can bragging sometimes be a problem?
- Why might we not want to brag about how good we are at helping other people?

STEP 4:

Introduce the terms "humility" and "humble." One way to define these concepts for children: not bragging about yourself, not thinking that you are the best at everything or that you know everything.

STEP 5:

As a family, discuss as a family various scenarios where you can practice humility. For example, what is a humble response to receiving public praise from a teacher or scoring the winning goal in a game?

Unit 5

WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

Despite our best hopes and intentions, as volunteers, there will be times when things don't go the way we expect. In order to strengthen the experience—both for ourselves as well as for the organization we serve—we must reflect on the challenges we face in order to understand, if not ameliorate them.

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 15 MINUTES)

WHEN SOMETHING IN OUR VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT MAKES US UNCOMFORTABLE OR NERVOUS

As volunteers, we sometimes encounter situations that may make us uncomfortable or nervous. For example, volunteers who work with people with mental illness or physical disabilities may experience situations that they are not accustomed to. While feeling uncomfortable or afraid is okay and normal, it is important as a volunteer not to become paralyzed in these circumstances.

Children may indicate that there is something or someone that makes them uncomfortable or nervous when they volunteer. You yourself may have some uncomfortable feelings that arise in you when you volunteer. Sharing these feelings as a family is very important. The activities in this section offer some framework for discussing these feelings and for bolstering one's courage in new and sometimes unsettling situations.

STEP 1:

Explain that after Pharaoh freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, the Israelites fled, only to find themselves unable to go any further because of the Sea of Reeds. A rabbinic story teaches that no one knew what to do until a brave man named Nachshon decided to start walking into the Sea with the faith that it would open. This story teaches us about the courage that it takes to be brave in a scary situation. After discussing the story, use the following questions to provoke discussion:

The rabbinic story of Nachshon is retold for young children in the book *Nachshon, Who Was Afraid to Swim* by Deborah Bodin Cohen. This version adds in a twist that will be familiar to many children; according to the book, Nachshon was afraid to swim, and therefore taking that first step into the Sea was especially meaningful.

- How do you think Nachshon was feeling when he reached the Sea of Reeds?
- Nachshon took a risk even though it made him feel nervous or uncomfortable. Is there anything that you have experienced as a volunteer that has made you feel nervous or afraid?
- When we are uncomfortable or nervous, what are some things we can do to help us calm down and be brave? (take a break, take a deep breath, talk to someone about our feelings)

Discomfort vs Danger:

Emphasize to your child that feeling discomfort is not the same as feeling unsafe or in danger. At any point when volunteering, if your child feels physically or emotionally unsafe, tell her to speak to you or another adult immediately and cease volunteering there. Also be sure to communicate and explain these concerns to the organization.

UNIT 5: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 5 MINUTES)

UPHOLDING OUR COMMITMENT

Before beginning your service, your family expressed its hopes and dreams. But what happens if your volunteer experience doesn't turn out the way you hoped or expected? How can you continue to be positive, give the benefit of the doubt as applicable and/or make adjustments to your volunteering in order to make it a meaningful and positive experience for all?

Materials: Copy of your family's volunteering *brit* (Page XX)

STEP 1:

Discuss as a family how sometimes when we do something over and over, we begin to tire of it. We may feel this way sometimes about going to school, practicing an instrument, or playing a sport. However, if we keep going, even if we are tired, in the end we often feel good and are very proud.

As volunteers, we can sometimes feel the same way. When we get tired, we need to remember why we wanted to volunteer in the first place. We can remember the story of Noah to inspire us to continue our volunteer work.

STEP 2:

Ask your child:

- What is the biggest project that you have built out of blocks or something else?
- How long did it take?
- How long do you think it took Noah to build an ark that was 450 feet long? [If you have time, visit a soccer or football field. Walk around the perimeter to give your children an idea just how big the ark was.]
- What would have happened if Noah had given up and left the ark half built?⁵

STEP 3:

Refer back to your family *brit*. Ask:

- As volunteers, why is it important that we do what we say we are going to do?
- How does it feel when someone makes a promise to finish something but then doesn't finish it?
- What can we as a family do to continue to enjoy our time volunteering together?

⁵ Adapted from: Kids of Integrity. Perseverance: Bible Stories. 29 July 2012. <<http://www.kidsofintegrity.com/perseverance-bible-stories>>.

UNIT 5: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

Tweaking the Volunteer Experience: If your child becomes resistant to volunteering, consider:

- Changing the time of day of the volunteering
- Incentivizing the service by having the child take photos or record it
- Engaging the child in a different role

Remember, however, that any changes that will affect the organization must be made *in ongoing communication* with the organization so as to minimize the stress on their staff to make accommodations. However, do not guilt or force your child if he/she does not want to participate. While commitment is important, developing a lifelong love of and appreciation for service is also important, and that cannot be done through guilt or compulsion.

UNIT 5: WHEN THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY WE EXPECT

ACTIVITY #3

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)
+ ADDITIONAL TIME FOR A CHECK IN WITH THE ORGANIZATION

A MIDPOINT CHECK-IN

As you approach the middle of your time volunteering, it is important to check-in both as a family as well as with the organization where you serve.

STEP 1:

Have each family member check in, offering one example of where things have been going well.

STEP 2:

Have each family member offer one example of where things might be improved. For each example, explore:

- Why do you think things aren't going as we thought they would?
- What can we do to make the situation better?

STEP 3:

Have one member of the family speak with a representative from the host organization to make sure that your needs and theirs are still matching up well. Be prepared to listen and share, as well as make adjustments as needed in coordination with the organization.

STEP 4:

Taking the organization's feedback into account, as a family talk about how to adjust your volunteering in order to be the most helpful and best partner you can be.

⁵ Adapted from: Kids of Integrity. Perseverance: Bible Stories. 29 July 2012. <<http://www.kidsofintegrity.com/perseverance-bible-stories>>.

Unit 6

CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

Beyond volunteering time, how can we leverage our resources in order to make the greatest impact?

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

ACTIVITY #1

TZEDAKAH—ANOTHER WAY TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Volunteering one's time is an important way to make a difference in the world. Giving money—in Judaism, known as *tzedakah*—is another way in which we effect change in the world. Money allows non-profit organizations to turn on the lights, pay staff salaries and support volunteer programs.

Your family may therefore find it very meaningful to give *tzedakah* to the organization with which you have been volunteering. You may choose to give on a regular basis (such as through automatic monthly donations), on special occasions (such as on holidays or in honor of a birthday) or as a culminating donation of appreciation.

Before donating, discuss:

- When and how often do we want to donate funds to this organization?
- How much money do we wish to donate to this organization?
- Where else do we plan to donate *tzedakah* this year? Do we want to give more to this organization or social issue because we are familiar with it through our volunteering?
- How much of our donation should be from kids' money or from parents' money?
- Do we want our money to go to the organization's general fund or to a specific area that the organization works on (also known as "earmarking")?

For additional resources, activities and texts designed for children and families on the value and importance of giving *tzedakah*, including a giving plan that will help you identify your *tzedakah*-giving priorities, see *Where Do You Give? A Tzedakah Curriculum*, an initiative of American Jewish World Service, at <http://wheredoyougive.org/education-portal/>.

UNIT 6: CONTINUING OUR IMPACT

ACTIVITY #2

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

MAKING A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT

As your volunteering time comes to a close, consider as a family what you can now do to extend the impact of your efforts.

Material: Paper, pens

STEP 1:

Trace one of your child's hands and your own hand on a piece of paper.

STEP 2:

On each finger, write down one thing that you saw, heard or experienced as a volunteer that was special or meaningful to you.

STEP 3:

On the palm of each hand, write one thing that you will do to help continue the work that you started. For example, in the palm you may write: donate money at Chanukah to this organization; talk to two friends about the organization's work; or write a letter to politicians expressing your support for this cause and for legislation that might impact it.

STEP 4:

Talk as a family about a reasonable timeline in which to fulfill your commitment. With young children, it may be best to do something that same day or week.

Unit 7

CELEBRATING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION: CONCLUDING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

As your volunteering time comes to a close, it is important to recall the famous Pirkei Avot text that "it is not your responsibility to complete the work but neither can you ignore it."⁶

⁶ Pirkei Avot 2:21

ACTIVITY #1

(APPROXIMATE TIME: 10 MINUTES)

MEASURING GROWTH

Although you have volunteered together as a family, each of you has grown personally as a result of the experience. Take time to talk about how you have each grown as a result of what you have seen, heard and experienced.

STEP 1:

Using the worksheet on the following page, have each family member illustrate their growth as a volunteer from the beginning of the experience until now.

- Next to the eyes, indicate powerful things that you saw.
- Next to the ears, list powerful stories you remember hearing.
- Next to the hands and feet, list things that you did that felt impactful.
- Next to the heart, list things that you intend to do or continue doing in order to support the cause for which you have been volunteering.

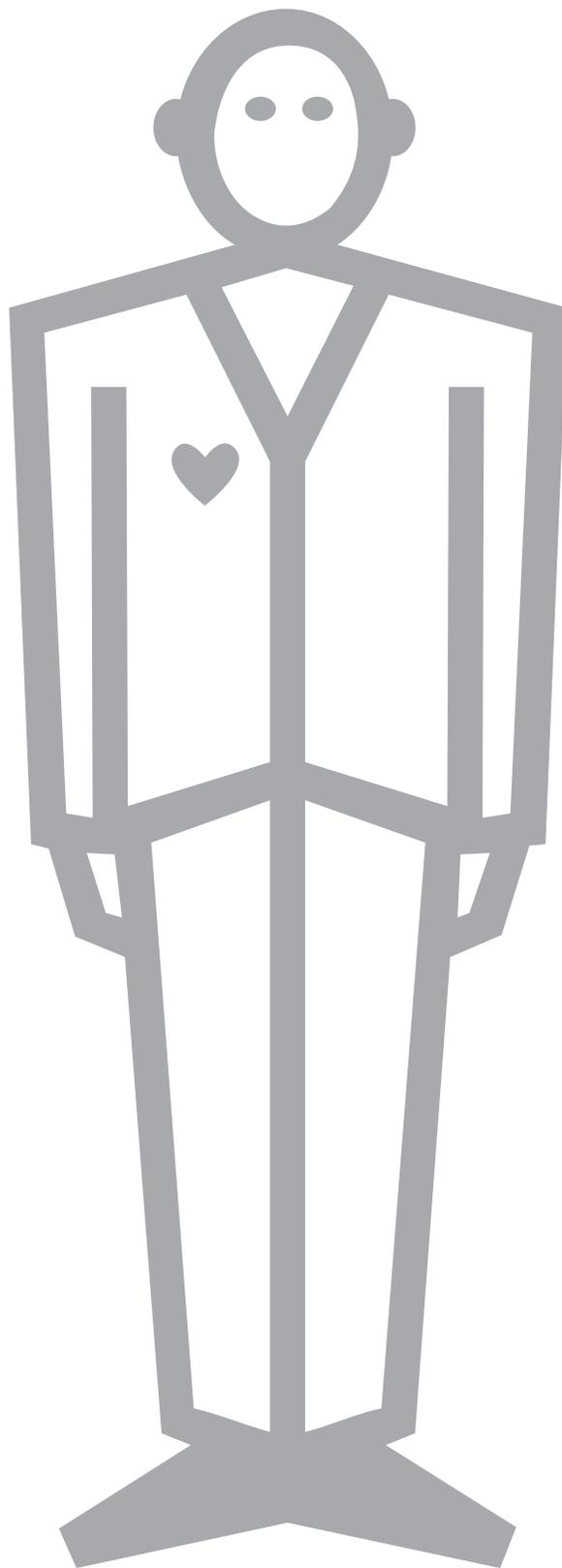
STEP 2:

Share and explain the illustrations.

STEP 3:

As a family, take turns acknowledging how each other has grown. For example, a parent may state that she has noticed her child is more humble in the way he speaks, or a daughter may acknowledge that her father has become a better listener over the course of their volunteer service together.

UNIT 7: CELEBRATING AND EXPRESSING APPRECIATION: CONCLUDING THE VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE



ACTIVITY #2 (APPROXIMATE TIME: DEPENDS ON THE PROJECT SELECTED)

EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Completing your volunteering can be an emotional experience. There may be feelings of sadness as well as accomplishment and celebration. Above all, there may be a sense of gratitude. As a family, it is key to consider how to express your own appreciation.

STEP 1:

As a family, consider how to offer gratitude to the organization that has hosted you. Appreciation is important for everyone, especially for staff of non-profit organizations who are often underappreciated.

Ways to Say Thank You

- On your last day, personally thank and say goodbye to anyone who played a special role in your volunteer experience (i.e., staff or clients/guests of the host organization with whom you volunteered).
- Create or write hand-written thank-you notes to the people in the organization who helped you along the way—from your original contact person to special people with whom you volunteered.
- If you have been taking photographs throughout your time volunteering, use an online site to make a photo book to give to the organization.
- If you have recognized a need at the organization (for example, new chairs for the waiting room or a new coffee maker), consider purchasing and donating that needed item.
- Consider making a financial donation to the organization.

ACTIVITY #3

A CONCLUDING BLESSING

Upon concluding a book of the Torah, it is traditional to recite "*hazak hazak v'nithazek*"—"Be strong, be strong and let us strengthen one another!"

As a family, recite this phrase together as you conclude your service.

May you go from strength to strength in pursuit of a more just world in which all families of the earth work together toward *chesed* (loving-kindness), *tzedek* (justice) and *shalom* (peace).

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