

Binding Signs

Eat, Pray, Dare

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SUMMARY:	This session explores the core messages we send through our external appearances through the practices of tefillin and henna. - <i>Submitted by Daniel Abramson and Ariella Rosen</i>
TOPIC(S):	Identity, Jewish culture
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will gain greater awareness around the messages that matter to them, and how they choose to display or carry those messages. If they choose, participants will also learn how to put on tefillin as well as basics of henna art.
AUDIENCE:	This session will be most successful with participants ages 12 and up, with a group size of 30 participants or less. For the tefillin/henna-trying portion, it's helpful to have extra help, so that participants do not need to wait long for their turn.
TIMING:	45 minutes
APPENDICES:	Tefillin Blessings, Henna Designs
MATERIALS NEEDED:	Washable markers Index cards or other small pieces of paper Multiple small cones of henna Multiple sets of tefillin (lefty and righty) Optional: printed sample henna designs - there are many available online http://www.artisticadornment.com/free_henna_designs/free_henna_design_book_samples_1.pdf https://www.pinterest.ca/pin/849069335968440378/
SET-UP DETAILS:	This session can take place in any space with enough room for all participants to sit in a circle, and to move around. Tables should be set up along the periphery of the space for tefillin and henna.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Timeline

- 00:00- 00:10 Welcome and intro activity with markers (including reflection)
- 00:10- 00:20 Conversation about permanence v. transience and internal v. external
- 00:20- 00:25 Intro to tefillin/henna
- 00:25- 00:40 Trying tefillin/henna
- 00:40- 00:45 Wrap up

Welcome and Introductions (10 min.)

**In this session, we will be thinking a lot about the ways that we communicate about ourselves with visual cues. It is important to be clear that we believe that each person is the author of their own identity. Judging others by appearance alone is prejudice. We alone are the authority on who we are, and we believe that learning about others requires respect and openness. This workshop is not about defining visual symbols of identity, rather it is a tool to encourage self-reflection, understanding and empathy.

Ask participants to think about a quote, saying, or message that is important to them- it can be a song lyric, a message from a coach or teacher, a lesson from a parent or loved one, a text, etc.

Give participants options:

1. Write/depict the message using washable marker somewhere on their body
2. Write a message on a sticker to display somewhere
3. OR participants can write it on a piece of paper. Participants might choose to keep the message hidden, or display it somewhere where it can be seen.

Invite participants to move around the room and interact with each other's' messages- let someone know if you like their message/it resonates personally/it feels connected to your own message.

Regroup and unpack the experience:

- How did it feel to have your message on display?
- How did it feel to carry your message without others seeing it?
- When are other moments that you display messages? Carry messages?
- How is it different to carry a personal message that to display it publicly?

The discussion is likely to head in the direction of personal vs. public and individual vs. communal. The intent is not to validate one way of thinking over another, but rather to hear multiple perspectives and contexts.

Conversation: What do we want other people to know about us? (10 min)

- Discuss some of the differences between symbols and messages that are permanent (tattoos, physical traits) versus temporary (clothing, jewelry, tefillin, etc).
- Discuss some of the differences between external (tefillin, tattoo in visible place, etc) and internal messages (scroll inside tefillin, tattoo on a hidden part of the body, wearing a favorite outfit, etc.)
- With all of these ways of displaying core parts of our identities, how does choice factor in? When do we have a choice? When do we not?
- Do you feel that the version of yourself that you display is consistent with how you see yourself?

Introduce the practices of henna and tefillin and share personal relationship to these practices (15-20 min.)

- Invite participants to try either or both practice- facilitators will float and offer guidance and support.

Wrap up (5 min.)

- In what ways are you thinking differently about tefillin/henna than you did before?
- How else might you carry your core messages besides the practices we explored today?
- How will you yourself carry your messages today? What message(s) will you carry? Do you feel a sense of consistency between what you carry on the inside and display on the outside?

- Discuss: these practices could also lead to discussion about body image, markers that marginalize groups and individuals, etc. Ask participants to consider what other topics could be explored through this concept.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

- As noted above, these practices could be used to explore other issues like body image, how marginalized groups are included and excluded, etc.
- If you have time you can also explore other Jewish symbols that are worn on the body- kippah, tallit, Jewish symbols on jewelry, etc.
- A question to think about: Is it cultural appropriation if it's within our own people? (Can an ashkenazi Jew embrace henna?)
- Depending on your community it might be interesting to explore: gender and egalitarianism with traditional Jewish practices (history of tefillin as a male-dominated practice).
- Another conversation to consider is: tattoos in Jewish tradition- history of taboo, Holocaust imagery, reclaiming in our time, etc.