

CORNERSTONE 2019 RESOURCE

Sticks and Stones: Rewriting Your Narrative

Elective 2

AUTHOR(S):	Chana Rothman
SUMMARY:	In this session, participants will share and examine identities they inhabit. They will assess and evaluate ways they have been defined and will physically and verbally destroy the narrative that doesn't work. They will create a new narrative for themselves. - Submitted by Chana Rothman
TOPIC(S):	Identity, Self-determination
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name and identify labels and identities which have been placed on them • Identify changes and un-truths about labels and stories they have been told about themselves • Describe the ways in which they do not fit these labels • Create a new narrative • Be able to describe how to make paper
AUDIENCE:	Ideally 20 or less individuals
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Appendix Aleph Appendix Bet How to Make Paper: https://tinkerlab.com/how-to-make-paper/
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper-making materials <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ blender (2 or 3 is ideal if it's a large group) ○ screens and plastic bins ○ scrap paper &/or newspaper ○ wire whisk ○ a bucket of water ○ a big square pan that's at least 8cm deep with a piece of window screen that fits inside the pan (10 - 12 of these) ○ a measuring cup ○ tea towels and sponges • Playdough for sculpting - one large fistful per participant • Scissors (enough for each participant or close enough) • Pens and markers and paper
SET-UP DETAILS:	Room large enough to have 2 different areas: one for paper-making, one for physical challenges and movement.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Facilitator states learning objective for this session, to deconstruct the narratives you have been told about yourself as Jew and any other identity you hold, to see what still fits and what you would like to re-write, or re-frame, or remove. You will create your own definition of who you are based on what you know to be true.

Pairs/Chevrotah

Facilitator divides the group into pairs. An explanation before getting into pairs:

- Many times throughout our lives, we are made to feel that we have to compete with each other or judge each other in order for us to survive/succeed as Jews and even as humans.
- We are going to break that pattern of competition by creating an environment of support, suggesting the possibility of endless camaraderie - that we are in fact stronger when we support each other and collaborate.
 - Brief summary of the concept of *chevrotah*: A partner with whom you learn. The Jewish framework of this term is significant, unique, and has a rich history.

Journaling

- Hand out questions and pens for each chevrotah/pair to answer. Give five minutes. Instruct the group not to think too hard about each question; artwork, poems, stream of consciousness, even one-word answers are fine. The first things that come to mind.
- Give time for each person to share in their *chevrotah*.

Paper-Making

- Ask participants to walk around the room, looking at the different quotes (listed below) which are posted on the wall. Invite them to respond with markers, graffiti-style, on a sheet next to or underneath the quote. *Optional: Can start playing music as they are walking around. Suggested Jewish female artists listed below.*
- Participants go back to their *chevrotah*. Facilitator gives each *chevrotah* a copy of all the quotes they just read.

Two options for responding to the quotes:

- a. On pieces of scrap paper, they respond to things they read or ideas or aspects of the being who they are, being Jewish, any other aspect of their identity that has been mis-defined (by their own definition or someone else's) which they want to destroy. They also write down things they read or ideas or aspects of themselves which they want to affirm.
- b. Another option is for them to take scissors and cut out sentences they particularly want to destroy or affirm.
- c. Of course they can also do both a and b options.

Whatever response they choose, Each *chevrotah* should have 2 piles: AFFIRM and DESTROY.

Facilitator explains:

We are going to destroy everything you want to destroy!

- a. Rip up all the papers in your DESTROY pile.
- b. Place all ripped DESTROY papers into the blender. Yahoo! Enjoy every moment! (Blender should be about half full of ripped paper.)
- c. Together we will say a blessing before we blend up all these things we want to DESTROY.
- d. Facilitate a spontaneous group bracha/blessing that we can say before blending up our DESTROY pile.
- e. Fill the blender with warm water. Run the blender slowly at first then increase the speed until the pulp looks smooth and well blended. (30 -40 seconds) Check that no flakes of paper remain. If there are, blend longer.
- f. Do the blender activity at least three times so you have a lot of pulp.

Reveal that we will actually be making NEW paper from this ripped up old DESTROY list. Instructions:

- a. Dump the blender contents into a bucket. If there's a large group, use more than one bucket.
- b. Take a frame (frames are picture frames with screen stapled onto them - see youtube clip), scoop up the pulp from the bucket onto your frame.
- c. Squeeze out excess water with a sponge or rolling pin.
- d. Each participant goes back to his/her/their "AFFIRM" pile of paper, and chooses one or more written words (from the quotes she received or from his/her/their scrap of paper that she wrote on), that she wants to affirm. Place those words into your pulp that is on your frame.
- e. Participant carefully peels the pulpy paper off the frame, places it on a newspaper. If there are hair driers to help, it will dry soon. If not, it will take 24 hours. Each person will bring his/her/their paper with his/her/their when they leaves.

A NOTE ABOUT PAPER-MAKING: It is HIGHLY advisable to try this before leading a session. There are many steps to it, and it will go most smoothly if you're familiar with all the little ins and outs of how to do it.

Playdough (optional)

While people are finishing up, if there is staggered timing (ie, if people are finishing at different times), participants can go to the Playdough table and sculpt a piece entitled "Me."

Physical Challenge

Gather group in a circle. Let participants know that we will be doing some physical exploration. Each of us will have a chance to hold space for someone else, and each of us will have the chance to explore our feelings physically, in a safe space, with the safety of someone else holding you. We are often forced to hold anger in our bodies that we don't always get to let out. Here we will have the chance to get some of those feelings out through our bodies.

To participants: *I invite you to recall some of the responses you gave while journaling in your chevrutah and taking in the words - things you hate that Jewish people have to deal with, things you feel you are fighting, things that make you angry as a Jewish person and as a person in general.*

First, I will demonstrate what each of you will be doing in your chevrutah.

Instructions:

- Your chevrotah from opening activity will hold space for you, and you will do the same for him/her/them.
- Find your chevrotah
- Choose what you want to physically push against, and tell your chevrotah.
- Each person in the chevrotah stands solidly, palms facing each other, ready to either push (if they are the one releasing anger) or hold the space and perhaps move backwards a few steps if necessary. The stance looks a little like you are ready to catch a trust fall, or spot someone who is climbing - one foot in front, one in back, legs bent, ready.
- NOTE: You are not trying to hurt your partner, but to push against them as a physical manifestation of what you are fighting. Your partner knows that the oppositional force is not directed at her, but she is holding that space safely so that you can release your feelings.
- Then, you switch.
- After each person has had a chance to do each role, ask them to take turns talking to their partner about what it was like. Each person gets 2 minutes to speak. Facilitator can time this. The listening partner does not need to speak or respond, but gets to just listen.

Conclusion

Gather group back into a circle, asking *chevrotah* partners to stand next to each other if possible.

To participants: *We deconstructed, fought against, and destroyed many of the things we struggle with as Jews and all the other identities we hold. We blended them up to create new paper which holds the possibility of being filled with new realities, new definitions, and still can carry forth old celebrations and affirmations. We have survived together, the death and rebirth of parts of our Jewish selves.*

Now I invite you to recall some of the responses you gave while journaling in your chevrotah and taking in the words and images of Jewish people - something you love about being you; something you would like to celebrate as a Jew; a hope or desire you have for the Jewish people; something that connects you to other Jewish people. Something that connects you to all other people.

You will turn to the person next to you and share this. As you share your response, s/he will take your hand. Then s/he will turn to the person next to them and share his/her/their response. That person will take his/her/their hand. And we will go around the circle.

Once all participants are holding hands in a circle, ask if anyone has any reflections or feelings to share.

Finish with a circle dance of facilitator's choice: Miriam's Song, Mayim, Niggun Atik - and an affirmation that although we are different from one another we stand in a circle together, stronger.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

How would you modify this for younger campers?

If you chose to do the physical challenge, how might you modify it for your group? How would you create a safe space to try this?

Suggestion: What would it look like for the counselor to hold space for all campers and each camper to have a turn pushing against the counselor's hands?

Suggested take-away: While you may not be able to do the physical challenge for many reasons, you can reflect on how you feel right now in your body. Think about what kind of physical activities you can do with your younger campers!