



# Welcome to the Grandparents Circle



## CORE CONCEPT

Exploring our own backgrounds and assumptions about intermarriage



### OBJECTIVES

- Participants will know what to expect from the program, including that the course is a means of encouraging Jewish identity in their grandchildren in an organic, genuine way.
- Participants will be able to compare their experiences and expectations for the course with those of others in similar situations.
- Participants will understand that supporting their intermarried children is key to nurturing Jewish identity in their grandchildren, whether or not they support the idea of intermarriage in the Jewish community.
- Participants will explore their own Jewish journeys and how their connections to Judaism have evolved during their lives.



### MATERIALS

- Room and door signs
- Name tags
- Pens
- Chalkboard, whiteboard or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- Refreshments



### HANDOUTS

- “Preprogram Questionnaire” (will be sent out before the first session, but it is helpful to have extra copies available for those who forget to bring them) **[Included with The Facilitator’s Guide]**
- “A Self-Assessment Tool for Attitudes Toward Intermarriage”
- “Ephraim and Manasseh”
- “My Jewish Journey”
- “Jewish Journey Questions”



### ACTIVITIES

- Welcome!
- Your Intermarriage Attitude
- A New Perspective on Intermarriage: Ephraim and Manasseh
- Your Jewish Journey

QUESTIONS? Contact The Grandparents Circle National Coordinator Rebecca Gross, [BGross@JOI.org](mailto:BGross@JOI.org), (212)-760-1440

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR:

Congratulations and welcome to the Grandparents Circle! Please use these notes to guide you through the Grandparents Circle curriculum. While we recommend you organize your class and facilitate activities based on the instructions you find here, we encourage you adapt the curricular material to your course participants' needs and the dynamics of the group.



### WELCOME!

*(Up to 40 minutes)*

## Introduction to the Facilitator and Course

As participants enter the classroom or wherever you choose to hold the course (see The Facilitator's Guide for recommendations), introduce yourself to participants and distribute nametags. This is also a good time to collect the "Preprogram Questionnaires" that will be mailed to participants before the first session. You may want to have extra copies of the questionnaire on hand for participants who do not bring it to the first session. You may decide to schedule time at the beginning of class for refreshments and socializing.

- ➔ **If participants have an opportunity to meet one another before class officially begins during a scheduled time for refreshments and socializing, or if they already know one another, you may choose to shorten the "Participant Introductions" activity.**

After participants are seated, welcome and thank them for joining the first session of the Grandparents Circle. Introduce yourself and share your own background and what motivated you to want to lead the Grandparents Circle.

- ➔ **Write a phone number and email address where participants can be in contact with you on the flip chart or white/chalkboard.**

Introduce the course to participants; include the following information:

- The Grandparents Circle is a program for Jewish grandparents who seek to nurture, and in some cases help establish, Jewish identity in their grandchildren who are being raised in interfaith homes. The program was inspired by the book *Twenty Things for Grandparents of Interfaith Grandchildren to Do (And Not Do) to Nurture Jewish Identity in Their Grandchildren* by Rabbi Kerry M. Olitzky and Paul Golin.
- The Grandparents Circle was created by the Jewish Outreach Institute, which is an independent, national organization that works to open hearts, minds and doors into the Jewish community for interfaith families.
- If your Circle is being hosted by a particular organization or synagogue, introduce it and any relevant background information that is related to the course.
- Each session will guide participants along a continuum for creating Jewish identity in their grandchildren. This is not a quick process. It will take time, and there is no one single “end point.” This is a safe space to ask questions and share experiences. As facilitator, you are not there to make judgments (about the grandparents, children or grandchildren or their practices). Rather you are there to support the goal of nurturing Jewish identity in grandchildren.

## The Mandate of Sensitivity

At this point, it is important to note that your role as course facilitator is to recommend methods and facilitate activities that will help participants encourage their grandchildren to form a connection with Judaism. As the course proceeds, participants will learn how these activities can become a natural, unforced part of their relationship with their grandchildren. Participants must proceed sensitively and be open and honest with their adult children about their desire to share Judaism with their grandchildren. Especially for those grandparents who have grandchildren being raised in another religion, it is integral that they communicate to their adult children that they are not trying to undermine their decisions about religion for their family. Additionally, participants should be aware and sensitive to the needs and feelings of their grandchildren’s other grandparents.

- ➔ **Your personal introduction as well as your introduction to the course should not exceed 10 or 15 minutes. Participants will need at least 25 minutes to introduce themselves and share what has brought them to the course.**

# Participant Introductions

Ask participants to introduce themselves to the group by sharing their names, briefly what has brought them to the circle and one expectation they have for the course.

You may choose to use these introductions as an “icebreaker” by dividing participants into pairs and encouraging them to share their names and backgrounds with each other. Together, they can brainstorm one or two expectations for the course. When the group comes back together, each individual in the pair can share what s/he learned about her/his partner and their mutual expectations. Make sure not to pair participants who are a couple with one another. If possible, match participants with others whom they do not already know.

---



## YOUR INTERMARRIAGE ATTITUDE

*(20 minutes)*

### Self-Assessment

Before participants can begin discussing ways to connect their grandchildren to Judaism, they need to be able to separate their own attitudes toward intermarriage from their feelings toward their intermarried adult children. Tell participants that you will now be distributing “A Self-Assessment Tool for Attitudes Toward Intermarriage.” Let them know that they will have about five minutes to fill out the worksheet. Encourage participants to be as candid and open as possible when filling out the self-assessment. Throughout the course there will be plenty of opportunities to consider the reactions of their adult children, but for now, they should proceed with the self-assessment without worrying about the opinions of their children or friends and acquaintances in the Jewish community. Assure participants that this self-assessment will not be shared beyond the safe-space of this meeting room.

➔ **Distribute  A Self-Assessment Tool for Attitudes Toward Intermarriage and pens.**

# Evaluating the Assessment

After participants have completed the self-assessment, facilitate a discussion based on their answers to the four questions. You may use the following probing questions to guide your discussion:

- Did your answers to any of the questions surprise you?
  - ➔ **For example, a participant with an intermarried child may feel surprised that deep down s/he is opposed to intermarriage as an issue in the Jewish community despite the fact that s/he constantly defends her/his child's intermarriage. Participants may also come to the realization that they know many individuals who were raised in other religious backgrounds but are now Jewish. Many adults do not practice the same religion that they grew up with, and those who do may practice the religion in a very different way than their parents do or did. For most people, religion and religious practice evolve over their lifetimes.**
  
- Have your answers to any of the questions changed since your own child has intermarried?
  - ➔ **For example, a participant whose views about intermarriage were in line with her/his community's views before her/his child intermarried may find that s/he does not disapprove of intermarriage despite negative feelings toward it present in her/his community.**
  
- Do you find that your own views of intermarriage have been influenced by your Jewish community's views?
  - ➔ **This question presents the opportunity to discuss what sort of influence the Jewish community has in participants' lives. The Jewish community can be a wonderful place of support for those participants who may be distraught over their children's intermarriages. But for those individuals who engage with communities that do not support intermarriage and do not welcome the intermarried, it is important for participants not to let their communities' stances on intermarriage get in the way of their relationships with their adult children and grandchildren.**
  
- Using only your answers to the assessment as a guide, has your opinion about intermarriage changed since your children have intermarried? How have you been able to support your adult children since they have intermarried?
  - ➔ **Encourage participants to evaluate this question by sharing with the group the actions they have taken to support their intermarried children. Participants' personal stories may be relevant and helpful in drawing out**

**the idea that no matter what their feelings (or those of their community are) regarding intermarriage, they must set aside negative feelings in order to create strong and lasting relationships with their adult children and grandchildren.**

At the conclusion of this exercise, explain that while the discussion about intermarriage is an important one, the goal of this course is for participants to connect Jewishly with their grandchildren. In order to do so, they must first identify and then set aside any negative feelings they have toward intermarriage. Supporting their intermarried adult children does not necessarily mean that they support intermarriage in the Jewish community. In order to best form relationships with their grandchildren, participants will have to look at intermarriage from a neutral point-of-view and separate out any negative feelings they have regarding intermarriage as well as negativity present in their community. No matter whether or not their own feelings toward intermarriage change because of their family situation, they have to be there to support and form a relationship with their grandchildren.

**➔ Write “Intermarriage does not end Jewish continuity; not raising Jewish children ends Jewish continuity.” on the white/chalkboard or large flip chart.**

Ask for a volunteer to read the statement aloud. Ask participants how it makes them feel. Let participants know that the Jewish Outreach Institute emphasizes this notion as a reminder of the necessity of its work, and that when they become frustrated or distraught with the idea of their adult children’s intermarriage, it is important to remember that making Jewish connections with their grandchildren can have great influence on their grandchildren’s Jewish identities, especially as they grow into adulthood.




## A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON INTERMARRIAGE: EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH

*(20 minutes)*

- ➔ **OPTIONAL:** Should you extend the conversation about attitudes toward intermarriage, you may choose to send the “Ephraim and Manasseh” text study handout home with participants instead of reading and discussing it in class. In this case, it may be helpful to provide a brief introduction to the text before distributing the handout.

### Introduction to the Text

Before distributing the “Ephraim and Manasseh” handout to participants, ask participants if they are familiar with these biblical characters. Some participants may be able to identify Ephraim and Manasseh as Joseph’s sons whose descendants formed the tribes that carried their names. Participants may also recognize the names Ephraim and Manasseh from the blessing traditionally said by parents for their sons on Friday evenings (“May you be like Ephraim and Manasseh...”). Let participants know that Ephraim and Manasseh are the children of Joseph and his Egyptian (read: not Jewish) wife, Asnat. Divide participants into pairs or groups of three and ask them to read the selections from Genesis 48 and discuss the questions on the “Ephraim and Manasseh” handout. Let them know that the class will come back together in five or ten minutes to discuss their thoughts about the selections and discussion questions.

- ➔ **Distribute**  **Ephraim and Manasseh.** As participants discuss the questions, visit each group to see if they have any questions for you about the selections or discussion questions.

### Applying the Text

After gathering the group, ask them if they have any thoughts or opinions about Genesis 48 to share. Ask a different individual to read each question aloud and facilitate a discussion about the role of intermarriage and Jewish continuity based on the blessings Jacob gave to Ephraim and Manasseh.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In verse 1, Joseph brings his two sons to his father when he learns that Jacob is ill. Why do you think he brought his sons to meet his father? Was it risky for Joseph to bring his sons from an Egyptian mother to meet Jacob?
  - Participants may not have been familiar with the many intermarriages in the Bible that have not undermined the continuity of the Jewish people, even during challenging times in Jewish history. Approach this matter delicately. While intermarriage is often viewed negatively in many Jewish communities today, it may have been commonplace during Biblical times. Additionally, at this point in time, Jacob was on his death bed. It was of little consequence to him that his son had married an Egyptian woman. For Jacob, it may have been most important to make an impact (through his blessings) on his two grandsons that he had not met until that very day.
  
2. How does Jacob react to meeting Ephraim and Manasseh?
  - Despite his illness, Jacob sits up in his bed and welcomes them. He even tells Joseph that Ephraim and Manasseh will be to him as Jacob's own sons. Jacob is a model grandparent in this instance. Even in his first meeting with his grandsons, he accepts them wholeheartedly. He does not question their background or upbringing and treats them with the same devotion that he manifests with his own sons. Ask participants how they can apply Jacob's actions to their own lives.
  
3. In verse 5, Jacob tells Joseph that Ephraim and Manasseh "shall be mine." What do you think he meant by this phrase?
  - Jacob accepts Ephraim and Manasseh as he accepts his own sons. They immediately become part of his family. Ask participants how such unconditional acceptance could impact their relationships with their grandchildren. Do they think such acceptance is positive?
  
4. Why do you think Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh?
  - There are no right answers to this question. Participants may each interpret differently why Jacob blesses his grandsons. Encourage participants to understand that all grandchildren are blessings, and that Jacob may have blessed his grandchildren to exert influence on them since he no longer had influence on his adult son, Joseph. Joseph may have blessed them to affirm a continuation of his lineage and Judaism.



 4**YOUR JEWISH JOURNEY**

(10 minutes)

## My Jewish Journey

Before participants leave, ask them to fill out the “My Jewish Journey” worksheet.

➔ **Distribute**  **My Jewish Journey worksheet**

Explain that they should rate their connection to Judaism and the Jewish community from “1” (being the least connected) to “9” (being the most connected) at various points in their lives. There is no one way to define “connection,” so participants should use their best understanding to influence the choices they make on the worksheet. Once participants complete the worksheet, invite each participant to hold up the worksheet and allow everyone else in the group to see it. Ask participants what they notice. Hopefully, they will see that their Jewish connections changed over time—throughout their lives. By holding up their worksheets, they will be able to see graphically that the numbers they circled move back and forth on the scale for each time period in their lives.

➔ **Collect**  **My Jewish Journey, so you will have it available for the next class.**



### Assignment

Next week, participants will have a chance to further explore their Judaism and Jewish journeys. At this point, you can explain that a Jewish journey is the path that participants have taken Jewishly. For example, a participant may have first encountered Judaism as a child in religious school but may have not really explored Judaism until s/he had his/her own children, at which point s/he began keeping kosher and attending Sabbath services weekly. Today, this same participant may only connect to Judaism through cultural means, such as books and movies. Each Jewish journey has peaks and valleys, as evidenced by the “My Jewish Journey” exercise. For the next session, participants will be asked to think about important events and milestones in their Jewish journeys.

➔ **Distribute**  **Jewish Journey Questions**

Let participants know that the questions listed on the handout are there to inspire them to think about important Jewish moments in their lives.

## Thank You

Thank participants for joining the first session of the Grandparents Circle and ask if they have any questions about the material covered today. Assure them that this is only the beginning and that next week participants will delve into how their own Jewish upbringings and practice can influence their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Let them know that there are multiple ways to connect with Judaism and just as everyone in the room may not identify with Judaism in the same way, the same can be applied to their grandchildren. The following sessions will give participants the opportunity to explore specific ways to nurture their grandchildren's Jewish identities.

Invite participants to stay after class if they would like to speak to you privately, and close the class with a "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip."

➔ **These tips will be given to participants at the end of each session as a concise take home element of what they learned that day.**

## Quick Jewish Grandparenting TIP #1

Apologize to your child and/or child's spouse for not being more supportive of their marriage.

**ALTERNATE** for participants who feel they have been supportive of their children's marriages:

Ask your adult child how you can be even more supportive or helpful, in regards to their inter-religious or inter-cultural marriage.

While some participants may find the suggestion of apologizing to their adult children controversial, it is an important ingredient in having successful relationships with their grandchildren. Grandparents must first work at mending or improving their relationships with their adult children. The support of their adult children is what will enable them to share in their grandchildren's upbringings. This tip is about opening communication, which is key to improving relationships.

All participants can take home the notion that a healthy relationship with their adult children is essential to their forming lasting and meaningful relationships with their grandchildren. How can participants improve their relationships with their adult children?

➔ **You may now choose to serve refreshments and have time for socializing if you did not do so before the session began. At this time, make sure that you have correct contact information for each participant so that you can hand out a roster at the beginning of the next session.**



# A Self-Assessment Tool For Attitudes Toward Inter-marriage

Please take a few moments to complete this worksheet.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please circle the statement(s) you agree with (you may choose more than one).

- a. Inter-marriage is inevitable in an open society.
- b. The best response to inter-marriage is to encourage the person who isn't Jewish to convert to Judaism.
- c. It pains me that my child married someone not Jewish.
- d. The Jewish community has an obligation to reach out to inter-married couples.
- e. It is bigoted to oppose Jewish-Christian marriages.
- f. The Jewish community has an obligation to urge Jews to marry Jews.

2. Please circle the statement below that comes closest to expressing your own view about marriage between a Jew and someone from another religious background.

- a. I strongly disapprove of marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background.
- b. I am disappointed by marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background without conversion to Judaism.
- c. I am neutral about marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background.
- d. I see marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background as a positive.
- e. I am not sure.





**3. Please circle the statement below that comes closest to expressing the most common view of members of your Jewish community (however you may define that) about marriage between a Jew and someone from another religious background.**

- a. Most folks in my community strongly disapprove of marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background.
- b. Most folks in my community are disappointed by marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background without conversion to Judaism.
- c. My community is neutral about marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background.
- d. My community sees marriage between a Jew and someone of another religious background as a positive.
- e. I am not sure of my community's views.

**4. Do you know any folks who are currently Jewish but were raised with another religious background (you may circle more than one answer)?**

- a. Yes, I know a Jew-by-choice who was raised in another religion.
- b. Yes, I know an individual with one Jewish parent and one parent from another religious background who was raised in another religious background but chose to practice Judaism later in life.
- c. No, I do not know anyone raised in another religion who is now Jewish.





## Ephraim and Manasseh

Please take a few moments to read the below selections taken from Genesis 48.  
With a partner or in a small group, discuss the questions that follow.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1)** And it came to pass after these things, that one said to Joseph: 'Behold, your father is sick.' And he took with him his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. **2)** And one told Jacob, and said: 'Behold, your son Joseph is coming to you.' And Israel strengthened himself, and sat upon the bed.

---

**5)** And now your two sons, who were born to you in the land of Egypt before I came to you into Egypt, are mine; Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine. **6)** And your offspring, that you father after them, shall be yours; they shall be called after the name of their brethren in their inheritance.

---

**8)** And Israel beheld Joseph's sons, and said: 'Who are these?' **9)** And Joseph said to his father: 'They are my sons, whom God has given me here.' And he said: 'Bring them, please, to me, and I will bless them.' **10)** Now the eyes of Israel were dim from [old] age, so that he could not see. And he brought them near to him; and he kissed them, and embraced them. **11)** And Israel said to Joseph: 'I had not thought that I would see your face; and, God has let me see your offspring also.' **12)** And Joseph brought them out from between his knees; and he fell down on his face to the earth.

---

**15)** And he blessed Joseph, and said: 'The God before whom my ancestors Abraham and Isaac [and Sarah and Rebecca] did walk, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long until today **16)** the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named in them, and the name of my ancestors Abraham and Isaac [and Sarah and Rebecca]; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth.'

---

**20)** And he blessed them that day, saying: 'By you shall Israel bless, saying: God make you as Ephraim and as Manasseh.' And he set Ephraim before Manasseh.





## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In verse 1, Joseph brings his two sons to his father when he learns that Jacob is ill. Why do you think he brought his sons to meet his father? Was it risky for Joseph to bring his sons from an Egyptian mother to meet Jacob?
2. How does Jacob react to meeting Ephraim and Manasseh?
3. In verse 5, Jacob tells Joseph that Ephraim and Manasseh “shall be mine.” What do you think he meant by this phrase?
4. Why do you think Jacob blesses Ephraim and Manasseh instead of Joseph, his favorite son?





# My Jewish Journey

Think about key moments in your life. Then, use the below scale to rate how connected (whatever that means to you) you have been to Judaism at various periods in your life.

\_\_\_\_\_ 's Jewish Journey

(Your Name)

	I was not at all connected to Judaism	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	I was very connected to Judaism
When I was in elementary school		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
When I was in junior high school		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
When I was in high school		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
When I was a young adult		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
As a parent of young children		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
As a parent of adolescents		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
As a parent of young adults		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Today		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	







# Jewish Journey Questions

Use the following questions to think about key moments in your life.

1. What connected you to Judaism when you were a child?
2. How did you engage with Judaism as a young adult?
3. What were the key Jewish moments you have experienced in your life?
4. How did/do you share Judaism with your children?





# Refining Your Approach



## CORE CONCEPT

Exploring our own Jewish identities and sharing them with our adult children and grandchildren



### OBJECTIVES

- Participants will compare their Jewish connections as children to their current Jewish connections.
- Participants will understand that they can be Jewish role models for their grandchildren by sharing Jewish behaviors and actions with their grandchildren in a natural, uncontrived way.
- Participants will understand the importance of talking and listening to their adult children about their grandchildren's Jewish upbringings.
- Participants will know how to stay positive when celebrating holidays, both Jewish and not, with their adult children and grandchildren.



### MATERIALS

- Room and door signs
- Pens
- Chalkboard, whiteboard or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- Refreshments



### HANDOUTS

- "My Jewish Journey" (completed worksheets from the first session)
- "Seeing Jewish"
- "Venn Diagram of Raising Children in Interfaith Families"
- "Sometimes a Christmas Tree is Just a Tree"
- "10 Ways to Support Your Child's Spouse/Partner"
- Contact list (to be created by the facilitator)
- "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #2"



### ACTIVITIES

- Getting Started
- Sharing Your Jewish Identity
- Involve Your Adult Children

QUESTIONS? Contact The Grandparents Circle National Coordinator Rebecca Gross, [BGross@JOI.org](mailto:BGross@JOI.org), (212)-760-1440

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR:

Welcome to Session 2: Refining Your Approach. This session will help participants better understand their own connections to Judaism and how to share them with their grandchildren. Participants will also explore the religious decisions their adult children have made regarding raising their children. Remind participants that nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities is only possible after much preparation and hard work. This session serves to make the nurturing process easier and uncontrived by helping participants recognize the make-up of their own Jewish identities.



### GETTING STARTED

*(30 minutes)*

## Exploring Your Jewish Journey

Welcome participants and thank them for joining you today for the second session of the Grandparents Circle.

- ➔ **Distribute the completed  My Jewish Journey worksheets that you collected from participants at the end of the last session.**

Ask participants if the “Jewish Journey Questions” assignment from last week helped them to better understand why their connections to Judaism have waxed and waned at different periods in their lives. Have a few volunteers share one time period in their lives that they felt very connected to Judaism and one time period when they did not at all feel connected.

- ➔ **Some participants may not have ever felt very connected or not at all connected since those are extreme emotions, but encourage participants to make their best estimation for a time in their lives where they felt more or less engaged by Judaism.**

Most participants will have felt less connected to Judaism at some point in their lives. Had that not naturally changed over the course of their lives, they would not be sitting here today. Just as their own Jewish connections have changed, they should expect the same from their grandchildren (and adult children). Patience is essential because connecting to Judaism may take time.

# Multiple Paths

In order to help participants better understand the idea that there are multiple ways to connect with Judaism, ask participants to share some of their answers from the “Jewish Journey Questions” handout. Participants may not have written answers down for this assignment, which is fine. Perhaps they only used it as a brainstorming tool.

- ➔ **Make two columns on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Label one “As a child” and the other “Today.” Please note: if some of the participants in the course are Jews-by-choice, it is important to acknowledge that they may not have been connected to Judaism at all as children.**

Ask participants to identify what connected them to Judaism as children. Have each participant list one or two answers.

- ➔ **Write those answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard under the “As a child” column. Answers will vary and may include: the smell of challah baking on Friday afternoon; religious school or synagogue; living in a Jewish neighborhood; Israel/Zionism; family (parents/grandparents); matzah balls.**

Now, ask each participant to identify one or two ways s/he connects to Judaism today.

- ➔ **Write these answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard under the “Today” column. Answers will similarly vary and may include: synagogue; Zionism; the JCC gym; cooking for Jewish holidays; eating on Jewish holidays; donating to Jewish causes.**

Ask participants to compare the two columns. Did they connect to Judaism as children the same ways they connect to Judaism now? Just as they may no longer connect to Judaism through religious school attendance, their grandchildren may not be connecting to Judaism through donating to Jewish causes or Zionism. As grandparents, it is important for participants to engage their grandchildren in Judaism in ways that their grandchildren find interesting.



## SHARING YOUR JEWISH IDENTITY

(40 minutes)

### What sort of Jew are you?

Participants are now aware that their grandchildren may connect with Judaism in a variety of ways. Some of these may be the same ways that participants engage with Judaism and others may be foreign to them (for example, joining Jewish “groups” on social networking websites). Participants may be wondering where to start. Let participants know that the answer to that question is written on the flip chart or white/chalkboard in front of them.

➔ **Point to the “Today” column from the Multiple Paths exercise.**

The easiest way to impart Jewish identity is by looking toward the Jewish activities participants already engage with and involving grandchildren where appropriate. The Jewish behaviors that participants model can influence their grandchildren. They just need to make it relevant for their grandchildren. For example, participants’ grandchildren may not be interested in donating to the local Federation’s annual campaign, but they may be interested in investing in another philanthropic cause in the Jewish community (such as donating directly to organizations that assist those in need, like Jewish community shelters or Mazon, the Jewish response to hunger).

### Making Judaism Visible

➔ **Review the “Today” column from the Multiple Paths exercise. Add additional options for ways that participants may connect to Judaism that are missing from the list. If time permits, you may want to ask participants to suggest additional ways that they connect to Judaism or display Jewish identity. You may want to add some of the following suggestions to the “Today” column:**

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reading books with Jewish themes</li><li>• Watching movies with Jewish themes</li><li>• Listening to Jewish or Israeli music</li><li>• Attending Sabbath/holiday/weekday services</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Donating to Jewish causes</li><li>• Synagogue/JCC/Jewish Federation membership</li><li>• Wearing a Star of David or chai necklace</li><li>• Supporting Israel</li><li>• Participating in social and educational programs</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cooking “Jewish” foods</li><li>• Participation in Jewish clubs and organizations, such as Hadassah, pro-Israel organizations and Jewish museums</li><li>• Speaking positively about Judaism and the Jewish community</li></ul> |
|---|--|--|

Tell participants that they have already set a strong foundation for connecting their grandchildren to Judaism simply by being who they are. The Jewish activities in which they already engage, as well as their Jewish behaviors, can have a profound effect on how their grandchildren see Judaism. Explain that their grandchildren will learn by their example, especially when Judaism is integrated into participants' daily lives.

➔ **Distribute  Seeing Jewish worksheet and pens.**

Tell participants that they will now have about ten minutes to complete the "Seeing Jewish" worksheet using the items listed in the "Today" column on the flip chart or white/chalkboard.

After participants complete the worksheet, have a few volunteers share their answers to the first section:

1. List the three Jewish activities or behaviors in which you engage that are most visible to your grandchildren.

➔ **Answers will vary but may include: attending synagogue; wearing a Star of David or Chai necklace; cooking "Jewish" foods.**

Explain to participants that their answers to this section show what Jewish actions and behaviors their grandchildren may already notice (even subconsciously) them engaging in. There is no need to overtly point out these actions and behaviors; they will be imparted to their grandchildren by participants simply doing what they are already doing.

Ask a few participants to share their answers with the rest of the group to the second section of the "Seeing Jewish" worksheet:

2. List three Jewish activities or behaviors in which you engage that are not visible to your grandchildren, but you would like to share with them.

➔ **Record their answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Answers may include: reading books with Jewish themes; donating to Jewish causes; supporting Israel.**

Unlike the readily visible Jewish behaviors and actions (physically cooking a Jewish meal, physically wearing a Chai necklace), participants must put forth effort in order to share these activities and behaviors with their grandchildren. These efforts should still be a natural (not contrived) part of the participants' relationships with their grandchildren. Using the activities and behaviors listed on the flip chart or white/chalkboard, brainstorm with the group ways that participants can help their grandchildren see

Jewish. For example, if a participant would like her/his grandchildren to be aware of Jewish news stories that s/he follows, s/he may choose to discuss the news story with her/his grandchildren. It is important for the participant to begin with a story that would interest the grandchild (a little leaguer might enjoy an article about the Israeli baseball league, for example) and share it in a way that is no different from how s/he would share information about any other news story. (In other words, don't overtly point out the Jewish factor.) Over time, the participant can develop the practice of sharing all sorts of news articles with her/his grandchildren, which can include Jewish interest stories.

➔ **If you choose to share this example with participants, you may want to let them know that there will be additional information about sharing Jewish current events with your grandchildren in a future session.**

Another participant may want her/his grandchildren to know of her/his support of Israel. This participant may choose to send her/his grandchildren postcards from important sites in Israel when visiting there and then share photographs and stories with them when s/he returns.



### **INVOLVE YOUR ADULT CHILDREN** *(20 minutes)*

➔ **The facilitation of this section will vary depending on the group of participants. If many of the participants are supportive of and have positive relationships with their adult children, participants will have an easier time sharing their wish to include their grandchildren in Jewish activities with them. But if participants have issues to reconcile with their adult children, you may need to spend some time discussing the importance of supporting their adult children despite disagreements participants may have with their decisions. See the Supplementary Activities and Handouts for more information about these conversations and alternate exercises for this session.**

## Leave behind your assumptions

Let participants know that sharing Judaism with their grandchildren is most effective when they do so with the support of their adult children. It is important for participants to talk to their adult children about their wish to share their Jewish heritage with their grandchildren, and it is equally important for participants to listen to their adult children. If participants are not completely sure about how their adult children have chosen to raise their grandchildren religiously, asking their children is the most logical but often unrealistic way for participants to approach this issue. Adult children do not always make questions like these possible. And even if they did, rarely is there a straightforward answer. Participants must approach their adult children with sensitivity because their adult children may not be sure themselves of how they are raising their children. Many interfaith families are not solely Jewish or Christian or another religion. Rather, these families' religious practices are continually moving between Judaism, Christianity or another religion and secular.

For this reason, it is best for participants to avoid making assumptions. Just because their adult children choose to have a Christmas tree one year does not mean they are raising a Christian family. And a family that appears to be celebrating Jewish holidays may also be celebrating Christian holidays (whether or not participants' adult children choose to share these celebrations with them). If participants' adult children have already indicated to them how they plan to raise their children, participants should be accepting and supportive of that decision. But it doesn't mean that they can't nurture the spark of Jewish identity that will still be resident in their grandchildren (unless they have been specifically asked not to so, in which case the relationship may be very difficult).

➔ **If most participants are absolutely certain of what religion (or combination of religions or lack thereof) their adult children are currently raising their grandchildren with, you may choose to skip the “Religion as a continuum” section below and proceed directly to “Celebrate with your adult children.” Depending on your time availability and group make up, you may want to complete one or both exercises (each exercise will take 15 to 20 minutes) or take your time to complete one and hurry through the other. If your class is split relatively evenly between grandparents who are absolutely certain about how their grandchildren are being raised and those who are not, you make choose to work in two groups and assign “Religion as a continuum” to those who do not know and “Celebrate with your adult children” to those who do know how their grandchildren are being raised.**



# Religion as a continuum

## ➔ Distribute Venn Diagram for Raising Children in Interfaith Families.

Explain to participants that religion is not static and that there are religious paths for families to take beyond Judaism and Christianity. Ask participants to plot on the Venn Diagram (intersecting circles) how they think, or know, their adult children are raising their grandchildren right now. For example, if a participant's adult children and grandchildren celebrate major Jewish, Christian and secular (i.e. Thanksgiving and Independence Day) holidays equally, the participant would plot that observance in the center of the diagram.

After participants complete the worksheet, ask participants to raise their hands if their plot is in the "only Jewish" section of the diagram. Then ask participants to do the same for the "only secular" and "only Christian or other religion" sections. While some participants will fit into these categories, many more will have plots that fit into one of the overlapping sections. Ask for a few volunteers whose plots fall into one of the overlapping sections to share where they chose to plot their adult children's and grandchildren's religious observances and why. Encourage participants to explore the nuances of why their plot fell in the overlapping section. Is it because their adult children and grandchildren celebrate mostly Jewish holidays but take part in Christmas and Easter celebrations with their adult child's spouse's/partner's family? Or perhaps they celebrate American civil holidays on their own and only engage in religious Jewish/Christian/another religion's holidays with extended family.

When participants come to the understanding that religion is a process, they will have an easier time approaching their adult children to explain their desire to share Judaism with their grandchildren. The circles illustrated by the Venn Diagram are constantly in tension with each other. Religious differences between spouses/partners may pull them apart, but spending time with family during holiday celebrations can push them closer together.

## Celebrate with your adult children

Holidays are often an emotionally-stressful time for participants and their adult children. Let them know that in order to stay positive they must keep holidays focused on celebration and family. Holidays are not a time to make assumptions, be confrontational or criticize. Holidays are also not the time to bring up issues participants may have with their adult children that have been boiling under the surface all year long. Holidays often push such issues to rise to the surface because families are spending

more time together or because something related to the holiday sparks it (such as the presence of a Christmas tree). It is important for participants to refrain from making judgments about the way their adult children choose to celebrate holidays in their own homes. Whether or not participants agree with the choices of their adult children, it is important to support their choices and celebrate with them in their homes.

➔ **Note: this exercise deals with participants celebrating holidays in their children’s homes. In Session 4: “Making Jewish Memories,” participants will learn strategies for celebrating Jewish holidays in their own homes with their grandchildren.**

➔ **Distribute  Sometimes a Christmas Tree is Just a Tree.**

Ask for a volunteer to read the passage aloud. Facilitate a brief discussion based on the passage using the following questions:

1. Do you agree with Maryanne’s mother-in-law’s decision not to state her opinion about the Christmas tree? Why or why not?

➔ **Give participants an opportunity to share some of their frustrations with their adult children’s holiday observances—whether it is a lack of Jewish observance or an abundance of observances from another religion. Explain that there is an important difference in sharing those frustrations with a group of peers and friends in a safe environment such as the Grandparents Circle and expressing them to their adult children—or grandchildren. Part of the goal of the Grandparents Circle is to help participants learn to respect the decisions made by their adult children, whether or not they agree with them. It is also important to understand that it may not be appropriate to share all of their feelings and opinions with their adult children.**

2. Are you surprised that Maryanne and Richie eventually discontinued putting up a Christmas tree? Why?

➔ **Emphasize to participants that they can influence the Jewish holiday celebrations of their adult children.**

3. If Maryanne did not discontinue putting up a Christmas tree but still raised Jewish children, do you think it would have eventually become an issue? What can we learn from Maryanne’s in-laws?

➔ **Encourage discussion about focusing on the positive (Maryanne’s latkes); respecting the choices of your adult children; and understanding how the passage of time and positive influences can impact your adult children and grandchildren. Remind participants that religion can change over time.**

Just as having a Christmas tree did not negatively impact the Jewish identities of Maryanne’s children, it will not necessarily negatively impact the Jewish identities of participants’ grandchildren. (The same is often true for Easter egg hunts and other expressions of Christian folk religion.)

## Supporting your child’s partner

**T**hank participants for attending the second session of the Grandparents Circle, and invite them to join you at the next session to learn about how to make Jewish moments part of their regular interactions with their grandchildren. Send participants home with “10 Ways to Support Your Child’s Spouse/Partner.”

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **10 Ways to Support Your Child’s Spouse/Partner handouts.**

Explain that the more functional participants’ relationships are with their adult children’s spouses/partners, the easier it will be to nurture the Jewish identity of their grandchildren. Tell participants that you are available after class to answer any questions and that you are distributing a contact list with participants’ telephone numbers and email addresses (if applicable), so that participants can contact one other outside of class.

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **contact lists.**

Conclude the session with a “Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip.”

## Quick Jewish Grandparenting **TIP #2**

Help your grandchildren to see Jewish by making your home visibly Jewish. List five Jewish objects in your home.

Participants can subtly influence their grandchildren’s Jewish identities by making Judaism and Jewish objects (not necessarily ritual objects) familiar to them. In the next session, participants will learn how making their homes into Jewish spaces can impact their grandchildren. To prepare for Session 3: “Every Day is a Jewish Day,” participants should identify five objects in their homes which they would consider to be Jewish.

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #2 handouts.**



# Seeing Jewish

Please take a few moments to complete this worksheet.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1. List the three Jewish activities or behaviors in which you engage that are most visible to your grandchildren:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. List three Jewish activities or behaviors in which you engage that are not visible to your grandchildren, but you would like to share with them:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

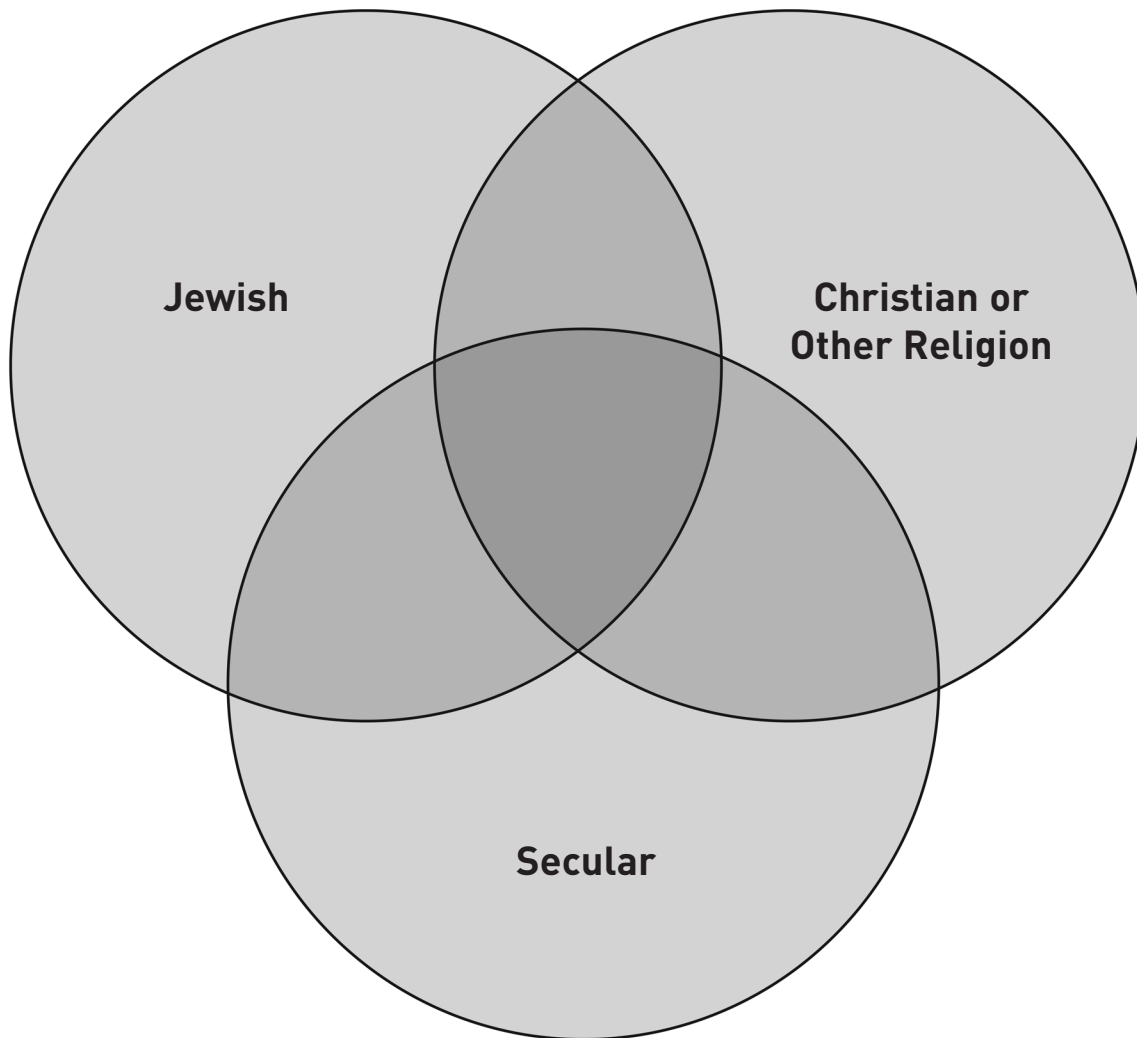




# Venn Diagram of Raising Children in Interfaith Families

Name \_\_\_\_\_

How are your grandchildren being raised?





## Sometimes a Christmas Tree is Just a Tree

The following excerpt is from Kerry M. Olitzky and Paul Golin. *Twenty Things for Grandparents of Interfaith Grandchildren to Do (And Not Do) to Nurture Jewish Identity in Their Grandchildren*. (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2007), pp. 34-36.

**Maryanne, a Christian woman raising Jewish children, and her husband Richie, a Jewish man, agreed to have a Christmas tree in their home.**

“Realizing all the sacrifices Maryanne would be making to raise their children Jewish, Richie relented [and agreed to have a Christmas tree], though he dreaded his parents’ reaction and actually kept it a secret from them for the first few years of the marriage. It was only after their first child’s brit and after they joined a synagogue that Richie agreed to have his parents over during the holidays, because he felt ‘armed with enough ammunition’ for the argument he felt sure would ensue. And when his parents arrived they did indeed seem surprised to see a tree, and Maryanne could clearly identify disappointed looks on their faces. ‘Oh, I didn’t know you had a Christmas tree’ was all Richie’s mom said.

“‘It connects me to my parents,’ Maryanne responded. Her father had passed away several years earlier. She then pointed out a number of ornaments that had special meaning to her from her childhood, as well as those that were actually older than she was and had belonged to her grandparents. To Richie’s surprise, there was no ensuing argument, and not even comments made to him privately. His parents apparently decided to take a ‘wait and see’ attitude and instead focused on the positive steps Maryanne had already taken toward Judaism. After all, during that very same visit she served them Hanukkah latkes she had cooked based on recipe her mother-in-law had recommended. Instead of complaining about the Christmas tree, her mother-in-law spent the night fawning over the latkes.

“Looking back, Maryanne greatly appreciates the emphasis on the positive that her in-laws always maintained. Their optimism and their celebration of Jewish life contributed greatly to her being able to raise the next generation of Jews. Without that kind of support, she doubts her children would feel as Jewishly connected as they do today. She also realized that the Christmas tree ceased to have the same meaning it once had. For a few years after she let go of the tree she continued to display her family’s ornaments. These eventually gave way to the children’s Hanukkah menorot made in Hebrew school—and to the menorot that her in-laws gave her and asked that she pass them on to the grandchildren and those who come after.”





# 10 Ways to Support Your Child's Spouse/Partner

- 1 **Celebrate** the Jewish efforts of your son/daughter-in-law (especially if s/he is helping to raise (a) Jewish child(ren)).
- 2 **Praise** and compliment your son/daughter-in-law for the Jewish identity that s/he is instilling in your grandchild(ren).
- 3 **Thank** your son/daughter-in-law on civil/secular holidays, such as Father's and Mother's Day.
- 4 **Welcome** your son/daughter-in-law unconditionally into your home.
- 5 **Encourage** your son/daughter-in-law to participate in Jewish activities with your grandchild(ren).
- 6 **Acknowledge** your son/daughter-in-law's effort to engage as an individual with the Jewish community.
- 7 **Put** yourself in your son/daughter-in-law's position; instilling religious identity in children is difficult—especially in the context of an intermarriage.
- 8 **Include** your son/daughter-in-law in Jewish activities you plan for your grandchild(ren).
- 9 **Share** in adult Jewish activities with your son/daughter-in-law; let her/him know that you want to spend time with her/him on an individual level.
- 10 **Engage** with Jewish institutions that welcome interfaith families.





# Quick Jewish Grandparenting

## Tip # 2

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Help your grandchildren to see Jewish by making your home visibly Jewish.  
List five Jewish objects in your home (they need not be ritual objects).**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_







# Everyday is a Jewish Day



## CORE CONCEPT

Providing ways to incorporate Judaism into participants' regular interactions with their grandchildren



### OBJECTIVES

- Participants will understand the importance of making their homes visibly Jewish.
- Participants will know the impact of using a variety of means to regularly communicate with their grandchildren and how to incorporate Judaism into those communications.
- Participants will learn strategies for sharing Jewish current events with their grandchildren.
- Participants will understand the necessity of learning about their grandchildren's interests.



### MATERIALS

- Room and door signs
- Pens
- Chalkboard, whiteboard or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- Newspapers
- Scissors
- Refreshments



### HANDOUTS

- "Seeing Jewish in the Home"
- "Beyond the Visit"
- "Communication Action Plan"
- "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #3"



### ACTIVITIES

- Setting the Scene
- Communicating with Your Grandchildren
- Staying Current

QUESTIONS? Contact The Grandparents Circle National Coordinator Rebecca Gross, [BGross@JOI.org](mailto:BGross@JOI.org), (212)-760-1440

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR:

In this session, participants will have the opportunity to discover ways that they can transform every interaction with their grandchildren into a positive Jewish experience. Participants will learn to think ahead about how they can Jewishly influence (in a subtle way) their everyday interactions with their grandchildren. This will be a more organic process for participants who are in regular contact with their grandchildren, either in-person, over the phone, or through snail mail or email. For participants who do not regularly communicate or spend time with their grandchildren, the first step is to begin doing so. Jewish influence is most effective for grandchildren who have strong relationships (not just based in Judaism rite and ritual) with their grandchildren. Throughout the session, it is important to convey to participants that relationship-building with their grandchildren must come before nurturing their Jewish identities.



## SETTING THE SCENE

*(40 minutes)*

### What makes your home Jewish?

Welcome participants and thank them for joining you. Let them know that today's session will be focused on how participants can create a Jewish environment for their regular interactions with their grandchildren. Whether participants live near or far from their grandchildren, they should be interacting regularly with them—if not in person, than by phone, email and snail mail. Some participants may only have grandchildren who visit their homes once or twice a year; it is important for those interactions to take place in visibly Jewish spaces. Remind participants that they can subtly nurture their grandchildren's Jewish identities by helping them to see Jewish.

Ask participants to take out their assignment from the last session, the "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #2" worksheet. Then, ask each participant to share the five Jewish objects in their home that they listed on the worksheets.

- ➔ **List their answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Answers will vary and may include: Shabbat candlesticks; Hanukkah menorahs; Kiddush cups; Jewish art; Jewish books; gefilte fish. When participants share a Jewish object that has already been listed, make a check by that object.**

Now, ask participants into what categories do these objects fall.

- ➔ **Give participants a chance to think of their own categories. If they are having difficulty doing so, you may want to suggest the following categories: ritual objects; art; food; music; books. List these categories on the flip chart or white/chalkboard.**

Explain to participants that the diversity of these categories reflects that there are many ways to make a physically Jewish home. If participants only list objects from one category—this will likely be ritual objects, since ritual objects are obviously Jewish—ask them what other items in their homes reflect their Judaism. You may need to help participants with examples, such as telling them, “In my home, I have a collection of photographs from Jewish communities I have visited throughout the world.” A photograph may not seem as inherently Jewish to participants as a menorah or mezuzah, but to grandchildren who are not familiar with those Jewish ritual objects, a photograph may have more relevance. (The menorah may look like nothing more than a candelabra and the mezuzah like a box on the doorpost, but a photograph, especially one that includes grandma and/or grandpa, may provoke curiosity and questions from grandchildren.)

## A visibly Jewish home

Once participants are aware that Jewish objects in the home do not consist only of ritual objects, ask participants which of the Jewish objects in their homes their grandchildren are most likely to notice.

- ➔ **Distribute  Seeing Jewish in the Home and pens.**

Tell participants to take five to ten minutes to complete the worksheet; some of their answers may come from the list on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Discuss how participants can make their homes visibly Jewish using the “Seeing Jewish in the Home” worksheet and the following questions as a guide:

- Look at your answers for question 1: What makes these objects visible to your grandchildren?
- ➔ **Acknowledge that factors such as placement of the object (if something is at eye-level for a child, s/he may be more likely to notice it), bold coloring or an unusual shape and relevance in participants’ lives (if kosher pickles show up at every lunch at grandma’s and/or grandpa’s house, this may have particular relevance to a child).**

- What Jewish objects in your home which are not currently visible to your grandchildren do you want them to notice?

➔ **Ask participants to share their answers to question 3.**

- Do you have any homemade Jewish objects in your home (made by you, your adult children during their youth or other friends or relatives)? What are they? How can you share Judaism with your grandchildren through art projects?

➔ **Participants can send their grandchildren art projects such as a holiday card making kit or supplies to make their own menorah—see the next activity for more information about communicating through mail—or do these projects with their grandchildren when they come to visit. Participants can then explain to their grandchildren the purpose of the particular project and display it in a prominent space in their home. As a result, their grandchildren will see it every time they visit and be reminded of the significance of the object.**

- How can you best impart information about Jewish objects in your home in a way that does not feel forced or unnatural?

➔ **Participants must deliver this information in a natural way that does not feel contrived. Their grandchildren are not expecting a lesson in Jewish history and ritual when they ask questions about Jewish objects. Rather, they are asking because they are curious about the role of the object in their grandparent's home and the significance of the object in their life. Participants should connect objects to their own lives and family histories. If grandchildren ask participants about ritual objects, they should make sure to use the objects with their grandchildren.**



## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

(30 minutes)

### Getting into a routine

➔ **Write on the flip chart or white/chalkboard the following three questions:**


- 1) When was the last time you were in contact with your grandchildren?
- 2) How were you in contact with them (in-person, by phone, by email, by snail mail)?
- 3) How often are you in contact with your grandchildren (every day, once a week, once a month?)

Have participants turn over the “Seeing Jewish in the Home” worksheet, and ask them to write down their answers to the three questions on the other side. For some participants, regular communication is already an element in their relationship with their grandchildren. While participants who live in close proximity to their grandchildren may have more opportunities for in-person communication with their grandchildren, there are many other ways for participants to be in touch with them (snail mail, email, phone). Participants who do not live in close proximity to their grandchildren should not be discouraged by the distance. Modern means of communication can even enable participants to “video chat” with their grandchildren through online instant messaging programs and web cameras. Tell participants that they will have a chance to discuss the many modes of communicating with their grandchildren later in this session, but first you would like to draw their attention to the third question written on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Ask participants to think about their answer to question 3 and how regular communication can positively impact their relationships with their grandchildren. While it can certainly be difficult for participants to find time in their busy schedules—and the busy lives of their grandchildren—to communicate regularly with their grandchildren, it is important to do so.

Participants should strive to be in contact with their grandchildren frequently—this may be every day, once a week or twice a month. It may be helpful for participants to schedule times to visit, speak to and email their grandchildren.

## Modes of Communication

Technology has made it increasingly simple to be in touch with loved ones. But even for those participants who see their grandchildren on a regular basis, it is important to be in contact with their grandchildren using a variety of modes of communication. Most participants will have used the telephone to be in touch with their grandchildren. Phone calls are a great way to stay in contact, but with the many instant communications available on the internet and through cell phones, participants can choose from a variety of means for keeping up with their grandchildren.

➔ **Distribute  Beyond the Visit. Depending on your group of participants, you may need to explain some of the communication modes, such as text and instant messaging to participants.**

Ask participants to take a few moments to read over “Beyond the Visit.” Discuss “Beyond the Visit” with participants. Ask them if they are currently making use of several of the modes of communication listed on the handout. If they are interested in sending emails and/or instant messages to grandchildren and not sure how, they may want to ask their adult children or grandchildren to set them up with an email and/or instant message account the next time they visit.

## Incorporating Judaism into your communication

Tell participants that regular communication through a variety of means is only the beginning when it comes to sharing Judaism with their grandchildren. Participants must be comfortable talking to their grandchildren about their grandchildren’s interests and only share Judaism at appropriate times. Jewish content should naturally fit into conversation. Ask participants to take another look at the “Beyond the Visit” handout and draw their attention to the “Making it Jewish” tip for each mode of communication. What have they already done to make their regular communications with their grandchildren Jewish? Do participants send their grandchildren packages before holidays? If so, what do they put in the packages? Generate a list of Jewish objects and foods that participants can mail their grandchildren.

➔ **Write this list on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. You may want to add the following items to the list if participants do not mention them:**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Jewish books</b>—holiday-related and general (that are age-appropriate)</li><li>• <b>Jewish music</b>—holiday songs and Israeli CDs</li><li>• <b>Baked goods</b>—honey cakes, donuts, hamantaschen, mandel bread and other family favorites (be sure to include recipes to do with their parents)</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Jewish DVDs</b>—movies about holidays and those with Jewish themes</li><li>• <b>Photographs</b>—of holiday celebrations, Jewish sites and Jewish artwork made by your grandchildren</li><li>• <b>Activity books and kits for Jewish holidays</b>—make your own Hanukkah menorah, seder plate decorating</li></ul> |
|--|--|

→ Distribute  **Communication Action Plan worksheets.**

Encourage participants to create action plans for how they can better communicate with their grandchildren. They need not decide right now how they can better Jewishly reach out to their grandchildren, but they can complete the action plan at home.

---



**STAYING CURRENT**

*(20 minutes)*

## In the news

Understanding Jewish current events and the role that Judaism plays in secular society can greatly impact the identities of participants' grandchildren. When participants send age-appropriate news clippings and other media of current events to their grandchildren, they are able to better communicate and share with their grandchildren what is important to them. But for participants who have never discussed current events (of any kind) with their grandchildren before, bringing up Jewish and Israeli-related current events may feel awkward. While these conversations should not be contrived, nor should they be lesson plans, participants must have an idea of how they can best bring these topics into conversation. Perhaps participants can snail mail or email a relevant clipping to their grandchildren, and then call them to ask their opinion about the article. If participants speak to their grandchildren regularly or see them often in-person, they can fold current events into their regular conversations. Participants should make sure the news that they choose to share has relevance to them and/or their family—they should make sure it is authentic. (For example, when sharing news about Israel, participants can relate it to a trip to Israel or family or friends who live there. Personal photos can also help with this approach.) For young grandchildren, participants can begin planning now for the news stories they may want to share with their grandchildren when they are a bit older. (For example, a picture book about Israel may be a precursor to an article that participants will share several years later with their grandchildren.) Participants can also share with their older grandchildren Jewish views on current events that do not necessarily seem Jewish, such as end-of-life

issues, stem cell research and faith-based initiatives. Younger grandchildren may be more interested in special interest stories about issues that are relevant to their age group. Ask participants what sorts of articles they think would interest their grandchildren?

➔ **The following activity is appropriate for participants with school-aged grandchildren. If many of the participants have very young grandchildren, you may choose to replace this exercise. See The Facilitator's Guide for activity suggestions for participants with very young grandchildren.**

Tell participants they will have a few minutes to flip through some newspapers and magazines and choose a story with a Jewish theme or relevance that they would like to share with their grandchildren.

➔ **Distribute newspapers/magazines and scissors to participants. You should have at least one newspaper/magazine for every two or three participants to share. You can bring a selection of Jewish and secular newspapers to the session, or you may want to ask participants to bring in the newspapers/magazines at the end of the previous session.**

When most participants appear as though they have found an article, ask a few volunteers to explain the main idea of the article and how they plan on sharing it with their grandchildren. (Will they mail it? Ask questions about it during a phone conversation? Relate it to their own family history?) Encourage participants to use the current event they found today to cultivate a conversation about a Jewish topic and to repeat this exercise in the coming weeks. Remind participants that sharing current events can be a mutual activity. Participants can encourage their grandchildren to share current events with them as well.

## In their lives

Staying up-to-date in their grandchildren's lives is integral to participants' goal of nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Through regular communication, participants can access their grandchildren's interests. They may be surprised at what children spend their time doing these days (for example, taking part in online virtual worlds and social networking). In order to interest their grandchildren in Judaism, participants must first know what their grandchildren enjoy doing and the way they enjoy doing it. Ask participants if they know what activities their grandchildren participate in outside of school, what are their grandchildren's favorite subjects, what are their favorite television shows, do they like sports and any other questions that may be relevant to what interests their grandchildren.



## For the next session

Ask participants to bring to the next session a few old photos of themselves or their adult children engaging in Jewish activities or photos that are associated with a Jewish event or holiday.

## Quick Jewish Grandparenting TIP #3

Learn your grandchildren's interests. List five things that are of interest to your grandchildren.

➔ Distribute  **Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #3** handout which participants will complete at home and bring to the next session.

In the next session, participants will learn and discuss a variety of Jewish activities that they can do with their grandchildren. For these activities to be engaging for their grandchildren, they must incorporate their interests.

Participants may not know what is of interest to their grandchildren. This is a great opportunity to put their "Communication Action Plans" into use. Participants can call or email their grandchildren and ask what they have been up to or how school has been. For additional insight and to avoid contrived "what do you like to do" sorts of conversation, participants may also wish to consult their adult children about what interests their grandchildren. Participants with younger children should focus on their grandchildren's developing interests, such as a favorite toy, movie or book.



# Seeing Jewish in the Home

Please take a few moments to complete this worksheet.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1. List the three Jewish objects in your home that are most visible to your grandchildren:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

**2. List three Jewish objects in your home that are not visible to your grandchildren, but you would like to make more visible:**

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- b. \_\_\_\_\_
- c. \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Choose one object from question 2. How can you make that object visible to your grandchildren?**

---

---

---





# Beyond the Visit

**Staying in touch with your grandchildren is easier than ever. Here are five ways to keep up with them between in-person visits:**

- 1. Pick up the phone.** Regular and frequent calls to your grandchildren will help you to become familiar with their interests—check in with them about friends, school and their extracurricular activities. Many older children have cell phones, so you can reach them anytime, anywhere!  
**➤ Make it Jewish.** Consider calling your grandchildren on Friday afternoons after school. In addition to the usual topics you discuss with your grandchildren, you can wish them “Shabbat Shalom,” or with younger children, sing a Shabbat song.
- 2. Send an email.** Emails are a great way to share e-cards, fun joke forwards, and links to informative websites and current events articles with your grandchildren. Even if you live in close proximity to your grandchildren, email is essential for keeping up with your grandchildren’s wired lifestyles.  
**➤ Make it Jewish.** Send your grandchildren bright and musical Jewish holiday e-cards, especially in anticipation of holidays that you will be spending with them. For example, a Passover e-card may play the common Dayenu tune in its background. When you sing Dayenu at your seder, your grandchildren will recognize the tune from the e-card.
- 3. Text or instant message.** With so many children spending their after school hours on the Internet (and when they are not at home, on their cell phones), you can instantly dialogue with them through instant messages on the computer or text messages on their cell phones.  
**➤ Make it Jewish.** Use the convenience of instant communication to alert your grandchildren to a movie with a Jewish theme that is on television.
- 4. Use the U.S. Postal Service.** In today’s wired age, a physical letter, card, photograph or newspaper clipping can greatly impact and please your grandchildren.  
**➤ Make it Jewish.** On your next vacation, send your grandchildren postcards and/or brochures from Jewish sites that you visit. Attach a note saying that you can’t wait to show them pictures and tell them about the vacation when you return.
- 5. Put it in a package.** Even as an adult, receiving a packaging can be very exciting! The same goes for your grandchildren, especially those who live farther away from you. Books, activities and baked goods packaged with a loving note are always a welcome surprise.  
**➤ Make it Jewish.** Get in the habit of sending Jewish holiday-related paraphernalia to your grandchildren before the holidays begin. If the holiday is associated with a particular food, such as honey cake for Rosh Hashanah and hamantaschen for Purim, make sure to include it along with books, art projects and games.





# Communication Action Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ **'s Action Plan**

- **One way I will communicate with my grandchildren is:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **Another way I will communicate with my grandchildren is:**

\_\_\_\_\_

- **I will be in communication with my grandchildren at least**

- everyday
- once a week
- twice each month
- once a month

- **Three Jewish items I will send my grandchildren over the course of the year are:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_





# Quick Jewish Grandparenting

## Tip # 3

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Learn your grandchildren's interests. List five things that are of interest to your grandchildren. Please be as specific as possible.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_





# Making Jewish Memories



## CORE CONCEPT

Creating a Jewish experience for grandchildren by sharing old memories and creating new ones with them



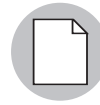
### OBJECTIVES

- Participants will understand the importance of incorporating their grandchildren's interests into Jewish activities in which they engage their grandchildren.
- Participants will reflect on their own Jewish experiences and be able to share them with their grandchildren through engaging and exciting storytelling techniques.
- Participants will recognize ways they can include their grandchildren in Jewish home activities in which they already take part.
- Participants will be able to create meaningful and engaging Jewish holiday celebrations for their grandchildren.



### MATERIALS

- Room and door signs
- Pens
- Chalkboard, whiteboard or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk for the chalkboard, whiteboard, or flip chart
- Colored markers for paper
- Refreshments



### HANDOUTS

- "5 Tips for Great Jewish Storytelling"
- "Jewish Children's Books"
- "Doing Jewish in the Home"
- "Making Holidays Memorable: Passover and Hanukkah"
- "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #4"



### ACTIVITIES

- The Importance of Memories
- The Power of Stories
- Doing Jewish in the Home
- Focus on the Holidays

QUESTIONS? Contact The Grandparents Circle National Coordinator Rebecca Gross, [BGross@JOI.org](mailto:BGross@JOI.org), (212)-760-1440

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR:

This session goes beyond the everyday interactions that participants have with their grandchildren and focuses on specific ways participants can involve their grandchildren in Jewish activities and holiday celebrations. As with the previous session, strong relationships with their adult children and grandchildren will facilitate the smooth implementation of suggestions described in this session. Remind participants throughout the session that relationships with their grandchildren cannot be built solely on Jewish activities.

Please note that many of the suggestions and activities recommended in this session are not designed for infants and very young children. If there are participants in your group with very young grandchildren, let them know that they have the opportunity to make Jewish memories even earlier with their grandchildren. Some of the lessons in this session will be relevant to their grandchildren, but participants may have to wait until their grandchildren are a little older to implement other suggestions included in this lesson.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF MEMORIES

*(25 minutes)*

### Creating a balance

Welcome participants to the fourth session of the Grandparents Circle. Explain that today's session focuses on making Jewish memories. Participants can Jewishly educate their grandchildren by creating memories around Jewish activities and events. Ask for two or three volunteers to share a potent, positive Jewish memory from their own childhoods.

➔ **If participants are hesitant to share their memories, you may want to be prepared to share one from your own childhood with the group to jumpstart the conversation. For example, you may have had an attachment to a particular Jewish children's book as a child or fond memories of your grandmother's chicken soup that was served every Rosh Hashanah.**

Ask the same participants who shared their memories to explain what they feel they learned from those memories and how they have carried them into their adulthood. The lessons learned from memories need not be big or specific. Rather, these lessons should be moving and lasting for participants.

- ➔ **If you shared a memory from your childhood with participants you can tell participants what you gained from it. For example, the memory of preparing chicken soup with your grandmother—using her recipe—may have led you to prepare it every year for your family meal on Rosh Hashanah to keep her memory alive. It may be one way that you have forged a link between generations.**

While participants will discuss making Jewish memories with their grandchildren in this session, it is important for them to keep in mind that not all of their activities with their grandchildren should be explicitly Jewish, that is, revolve around a Jewish ritual activity or holiday. Participants should continue to spend time with their grandchildren and engage them as they normally would (for example, visiting the zoo, going to the movies, baking cookies together). Participants can integrate Jewish memories into their regular and ongoing activities with their grandchildren.

## Incorporating their interests

**M**aking Jewish memories is not a onetime activity. Participants must continually engage in Jewish activities with their grandchildren. These ongoing activities will be most successful when participants incorporate their grandchildren's interests. Ask participants to turn their attention to their assignment from the last session, "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #3." Facilitate a brief discussion about their grandchildren's interests based on the following questions:

- Were you surprised at what activities in which your grandchildren participate?
- ➔ **Some participants may have a great awareness of their grandchildren's interests and were able to complete the worksheet without the assistance of their adult children or grandchildren. Other participants may be surprised at how their grandchildren spend their free time and may even be unaware of some of their activities.**
- In which of your grandchildren's interests and activities can you take part? How?
- ➔ **Compile a list of participants' answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Leave some space next to each of the answers so that you can add additional information later in the discussion. Explain to participants that taking part in an interest or activity can range from watching a grandchild's soccer game to baking chocolate chip cookies with a budding gourmet grandchild.**



- What Jewish elements can you add to the interests and activities that your grandchildren already enjoy?
  - ➔ **Encourage a few participants to share how they can incorporate Judaism into their grandchildren's interests. For example, a grandchild who enjoys playing an instrument may enjoy receiving sheet music or a recording of famous classical piece of music by a Jewish composer. The participant can then listen to the grandchild play the music on her/his instrument or enjoy the recording with her/him. List these answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard next to their grandchildren's activities in which they can take part. If "Playing piano" is listed as an activity in which the participant can take part, then you can write "Jewish recording/sheet music" next to it as the Jewish element that participants can add. This exercise should be brief as participants will acknowledge their grandchildren's interests throughout the session.**
- 



## THE POWER OF STORIES

*(30 minutes)*

### Sharing your stories

Not all of participants' grandchildren's Jewish memories need to be original. Participants' Jewish memories can become their grandchildren's memories. Participants can use their own Jewish pasts to connect their grandchildren to Jewish peoplehood. By sharing stories that have Jewish themes with their grandchildren, participants can link their grandchildren with their Jewish backgrounds. While it is important to consider their grandchildren's interests when sharing stories, usually the main point of interest arises from the subject of the story: their grandma and/or grandpa or parents.

- ➔ **Distribute  Five Tips for Great Jewish Storytelling and pens to participants.**

Ask participants to read over the tips suggested on the worksheet and use the questions below each tip to guide their approach to sharing stories with their grandchildren. After participants have completed the worksheet, divide them into small groups or pairs where they will practice the storytelling techniques they have just learned.

- ➔ **In the previous session or through communication between sessions, participants will be asked to bring in a few old photos of themselves or their adult children engaging in Jewish activities or photos that are associated with a Jewish event or holiday.**

Ask participants to take out the photographs that they have brought to this session and choose one to use as a prompt for telling a Jewish story about the photo. Demonstrate this exercise by bringing a photo to the session and telling the group a story about it.

- ➔ **For example, you may choose to show the group a photo of your family dressed up before a family-centered Jewish holiday, such as Passover. You can explain that while the photo appears to simply be a group shot of your family, the added value to this photo is that it was taken before Passover. You could then explain that when you were growing up, your family got together every Passover. (Remind participants that for stories such as the one you are telling, they need to be prepared to explain what a seder is to grandchildren who have never learned about or been to one. They might consider having other photos or a hagaddah at hand to better illustrate their explanation of the seder.) You could then share anecdotes about the seder, such as special food, sibling rivalry when searching for the afikomen and favorite family traditions. This type of story would make the most sense being told around Passover time, while it may feel stilted in December.**

Visit each pairing or group as they practice telling their story with photos. When participants have completed the exercise (this should take about ten minutes), ask them if they have any questions. Let them know that the next step is to start telling the stories to their grandchildren. They need not wait for the next Jewish holiday or a lifecycle event to begin, though they should relate the stories to something timely and meaningful for their grandchildren. They should begin this process immediately since telling Jewish stories is another way to help their grandchildren see Jewish.

## Reading stories

Participants can read Jewish stories to their grandchildren to help them connect with and understand Jewish topics. Participants should choose books that have relevance to the Jewish calendar or that they can connect with their own Jewish experiences. Jewish cookbooks are a great way to share information about Jewish holidays with grandchildren, especially when participants make the recipes in the cookbooks with them and their adult children. Participants who do not frequently see their grandchildren in-person can read books to their grandchildren over the phone or using web cameras.

Tell participants you will be distributing a list for them to write down any Jewish children's books their grandchildren have enjoyed. Let them know that you will make copies of this list and distribute it at the next session. To start the list off, you can add some of your own recommendations.

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **Jewish Children's Books.** *What Makes Someone a Jew* by Lauren Seidman, *I'm Growing* by Howard I. Bogot and Daniel B. Symehave and *The Shabbat Box* by Lesley Simpson have already been included on the handout.

---



## DOING JEWISH IN THE HOME

(15 minutes)

### Addressing your grandchildren's interests

Participants can begin nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities by making their visits memorable and Jewish. By taking part in Jewish household activities with their grandchildren, participants can teach their grandchildren about their Jewish heritage and engage them in it. Participants can successfully do Jewish in their homes with their grandchildren by incorporating their grandchildren's interests into activities in which participants are already engaged. If participants have never baked challah or lit Shabbat candles, it may seem contrived if they begin doing so only when their grandchildren visit. Instead, participants can share Jewish household activities that they are already taking part in with their grandchildren.

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **Doing Jewish in the Home and colored markers to participants.**

Explain to participants that they will have a few minutes to complete the worksheet. Let them know that the worksheet is not a comprehensive list of Jewish activities that can be undertaken in the home and that they should feel free to add to the list, using the back of the worksheet to add more examples.

Once participants have completed the worksheet ask participants to review the activities they checked off or added to it. Ask participants to compare the activities on the “Doing Jewish in the Home” worksheet with their grandchildren’s interests they listed on the “Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #3” handout. Can any of their grandchildren’s interests be incorporated into the Jewish home activities in which they already participate? Participants should use the colored markers to circle any of the Jewish activities that they checked and/or added to the “Doing Jewish in the Home” worksheet that would appeal to their grandchildren’s interests. For example, a participant who already watches Jewish pop culture movies may invite a grandchild who enjoys movies to share in that activity. Ask for a few participants to share which of the Jewish activities they already participate in at home might interest their grandchildren and how they can include them in that activity.

---



## **FOCUS ON THE HOLIDAYS**

*(20 minutes)*

### Throw the best holiday parties ever

Most children enjoy parties, so it is natural for participants to include their grandchildren in the celebration of Jewish holidays—especially those which are geared toward family and the home. Ask participants if they already celebrate Jewish holidays in their homes with their grandchildren and how they do so. Let them know that making a big deal of a holiday and its celebration will excite and enthuse their grandchildren. For most participants, it will not be realistic for them to spend every Jewish holiday with their grandchildren. (Some participants themselves may not celebrate all of the Jewish holidays.) Rather, participants must decide which holidays are most appropriate—and easiest—to share with their grandchildren. When making this decision, it is important for participants to take into account the holidays that they enjoy celebrating. Participants can plan for holidays as they occur on the calendar, or they can choose to focus on creating celebrations for holidays that will resonate most with their grandchildren. This second approach is often very helpful when planning for young grandchildren and those who live at a distance and only visit at specific times during the year.

Because Passover and Hanukkah are the two most celebrated Jewish holidays in North America, they are a logical choice for celebration in participants' homes. Purim, while celebrated by fewer individuals, is an opportunity for participants to bring their grandchildren to the synagogue due to its lighthearted and child-friendly atmosphere, noise-making and costumes. While participants may choose to share any number of Jewish holidays with their grandchildren, this session focuses on Passover and Hanukkah since they are easily—and festively—celebrated in participants' homes. In particular, the Passover celebration is already full of questions and explanations, so first-timers and children may feel more comfortable in Passover's ritualized learning environment. Hanukkah offers many opportunities for participants to Jewishly connect with their grandchildren during its eight nights of celebration. For all holidays, it is imperative for participants to translate all Hebrew, including blessings, and explain the rituals and traditions associated with the holidays.

## Make it memorable

### ➔ Distribute **Making the Holidays Memorable: Passover and Hanukkah.**

Give participants a few minutes to skim the handout. Explain to participants that this handout features a list of tips suggesting ways they can maximize their celebrations of Passover and Hanukkah to best include and engage their grandchildren. Note that this handout only suggests a few of the numerous ways participants can make holidays appealing and exciting for their grandchildren. Participants may also be able to apply some of the tips listed for Passover and Hanukkah to other holidays. For example, participants can make any holiday memorable by taking photographs and sharing memories of the celebration with their grandchildren.

Hold a discussion about Passover and Hanukkah using the following questions:

- Which of the tips listed on the handout do you already do?
- Which of the tips would you like to incorporate into your Passover and Hanukkah celebrations? How can you do so?
- What are some of your existing Passover and Hanukkah family traditions? How can you combine those with new traditions that will make comfortable and include your adult children and grandchildren?

➔ **Encourage participants to apply the tips listed on the handout to their own lives. It is unrealistic for participants who have had the same format for their seder for many years to change all of their Passover traditions. Explain to participants that using holiday celebrations to nurture their grandchildren's Jewish identities does not mean that they have to change the holiday**

celebrations that they enjoy and are familiar with. Rather, participants can incorporate new and inclusive elements into their existing celebrations. For example, when participants make homemade invitations to their seders or Hanukkah parties with their grandchildren, they include them in elements of the holiday preparation process. The more their grandchildren feel included in the preparation, the more they will feel part of the entire celebration.

## Quick Jewish Grandparenting TIP #4

Start small. List three ways you can begin nurturing your grandchildren's Jewish identities.

➔ Distribute  **Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #4** handout which participants will complete at home and bring to the next session.

Nurturing a Jewish identity is a lifelong process. Using the suggestions and ideas that participants have acquired in today's session, as well as in previous sessions, they can use this handout to take note of the steps they will take to begin nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Let participants know that they can list both big and small plans for their grandchildren, from throwing a Hanukkah party to simply sending a Jewish book about Hanukkah to their grandchildren.



# Five Tips for Great Jewish Storytelling

Please take a few moments to read and complete this worksheet.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**1 Get Visual.** Use photos, video, family heirlooms and artifacts to illustrate your stories.

➔ **What** photos or videos do you have of Jewish events or activities that have accompanying stories which would interest your grandchildren?

---

---

**2 Focus on the Jewish Calendar.** Share stories about Jewish holidays and lifecycle events.

➔ **What** anecdotes about family holiday celebrations can you share with your grandchildren?

---

---

**3 Choose your Characters Strategically.** Your grandchildren will respond positively and with excitement to stories about significant people in their lives, such as their parents.

➔ **What** stories can you share with your grandchildren about your son/daughter doing Jewish?

---

---

**4 Keep it Informal.** Prepare stories in advance so that you can make use of photos and other props, but share the stories in an informal way. Steer clear of lesson plans and didactic approaches.

➔ **How** can you stimulate your grandchildren to ask you questions when telling them a story?

---

---

**5 Make It Interactive.** Create projects and activities out of stories. Make a family tree with your grandchildren or devise a scavenger hunt for them based on a story and photos or heirlooms.

➔ **What** stories can you transform into activities that will help your grandchildren discover their family histories?

---

---









# Doing Jewish in the Home

Please take a few moments to check off what Jewish activities you take part in at home, and use the blank spaces to add activities that are not listed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## I am already doing Jewish in my home by:

- Cooking or baking Jewish foods;
- Participating in Jewish study;
- Praying;
- Creating Jewish crafts, such as a Hanukkah menorah or a tzedekah box;
- Participating in holiday traditions, such as:
  - Building and/or decorating a sukkah;
  - Lighting a Hanukkah menorah;
  - Lighting Shabbat candles;
  - Hosting a seder;
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Taking part in Jewish cultural activities, such as:
  - Watching Jewish movies (*e.g. Fiddler on the Roof, Keeping the Faith*);
  - Listening to Jewish music;
  - Reading Jewish books;
  - \_\_\_\_\_
  - \_\_\_\_\_
- Discussing Jewish current events;
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_





# Making the Holidays Memorable: Passover and Hanukkah

PASSOVER	HANUKKAH
<p><b>Send Invitations.</b> Ask your grandchildren to help you design personalized invitations to the seder.</p>	<p><b>Light Candles Together.</b> Make an effort to light candles with your grandchildren on as many nights as possible. You may need to make arrangements to “light candles” with them over the phone or via web camera.</p>
<p><b>Buy or Make Haggadahs.</b> Look for new and innovative or kid-friendly versions, or use a loose-leaf notebook to compile family-friendly readings, games and activities for the seder. Invite your grandchildren to contribute to the haggadahs, and make enough for all of your guests.</p>	<p><b>Plan Your Presents.</b> Hanukkah isn’t only about presents, but taking advantage of the eight nights of gifts can help to excite your grandchildren about the holiday.</p>
<p><b>Decorate Your House.</b> Passover decorations will make your seder more festive. Consider choosing a theme for the decorations, such as Egypt or freedom.</p>	<p><b>Give Back.</b> Encourage older grandchild to forgo one night of presents in order to volunteer or donate what would have been their gift to those in need.</p>
<p><b>Create Homemade Seder Plates.</b> Invite your grandchildren to decorate seder plates at a local pottery painting store or by drawing on and laminating paper plates.</p>	<p><b>Create Hanukkah Art.</b> Make hanukiyot (Hanukkah menorahs), cards and decorations with your grandchildren. Use this opportunity to teach them about the ritual objects and symbols associated with Hanukkah.</p>
<p><b>Make or Buy a Plague Kit.</b> Use toy frogs, dark sunglasses and other plague-related items to illustrate the seder. You can assemble your own or find it online or at a Judaica store.</p>	<p><b>Share Recipes.</b> Before Hanukkah, teach your grandchildren about the “Hanukkah miracle” by making recipes for fried treats, such as donuts and latkes, with them.</p>
<p><b>Wear Costumes.</b> Dress up in themed costumes, and invite your grandchildren to do the same.</p>	<p><b>Play Dreidel.</b> Teach your grandchildren this fun, gambling game using pennies or candies.</p>
<p><b>Prepare Snacks.</b> An edible centerpiece, such as a veggie bouquet or an avocado frog, serves as a lovely decoration and appeases hungry grandchildren during the telling of the Passover story.</p>	<p><b>Throw a Party.</b> Invite your grandchildren to a Hanukkah party complete with a candle lighting, Hanukkah foods, music, decorations and a dreidel spinning contest.</p>
<p><b>Move around.</b> Add variety to your seder by changing rooms in between the telling of the Passover story and the meal.</p>	<p><b>Send a Package.</b> If you can’t physically be with your grandchildren on Hanukkah (or even if you can), send them a package with a menorah, candles, dreidels recipes and presents. You may want to include decorations so that they can stage their own Hanukkah party.</p>
<p><b>Search.</b> Don’t limit searching only for the afikomen. Prepare a scavenger hunt of items or parts of the seder that your grandchildren can look out for. You may want to include this list as part of your homemade haggadah.</p>	<p><b>Make it Memorable.</b> Take photographs of your Hanukkah celebration and your grandchildren’s contributions to it (homemade hanukiyot, cards, decorations, etc.) and mail or email the photos to them to remind them of the fun you had and excite them about upcoming holidays.</p>
<p><b>Plan Ahead.</b> Ask your grandchildren what they liked about the seder, if they have any questions and how they can contribute next year. What pages would they like to add to the homemade haggadah?</p>	





# Quick Jewish Grandparenting

## Tip # 4

Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Start small. List three ways you can begin nurturing your grandchildren's Jewish identities.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_





# Bringing It Home



## CORE CONCEPT

Nurturing Jewish identities is a lifelong and multifaceted endeavor



### OBJECTIVES

- Participants will understand how to use financial incentives in a positive way to encourage their grandchildren's involvement in Jewish activities.
- Participants will know the importance of staying positive and acknowledging that imparting Jewish identity is an ongoing process.
- Participants will know how the Jewish community can be of support to them.
- Participants will decide on their next steps together as a group.
- Participants will reflect on their own experiences nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities and celebrate every achievement.
- Participants will evaluate their experience in the Grandparents Circle.



### MATERIALS

- Room and door signs
- Pens
- Chalkboard, whiteboard or large flip chart
- Colored markers or chalk
- Refreshments



### HANDOUTS

- "Making Money Whisper: Five Ways to Give Jewish Gifts"
- "Remain Optimistic"
- "Jewish Children's Books" (photocopied list from Session 4: Making Jewish Memories)
- Jewish Community Resources (compiled by the facilitator)
- "Post-Program Questionnaire" (available with The Facilitator's Guide)
- "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #5"



### ACTIVITIES

- Starting Small
- Remaining Optimistic
- What's Next?

QUESTIONS? Contact The Grandparents Circle National Coordinator Rebecca Gross, [BGross@JOI.org](mailto:BGross@JOI.org), (212)-760-1440

## NOTES TO FACILITATOR:

Welcome to Session 5: Bringing It Home. This session is meant to serve as the final session of the Grandparents Circle. If you would like to facilitate an additional session for your group, please see the Facilitator's Guide for additional activities and resources. The additional session should precede this session.

You may choose to make this session more festive by arranging more elaborate refreshments or serving a meal before or after the session. The session should instill hope in participants and enable them to celebrate the skills that they have gained, as well as the relationships they have formed in the Grandparents Circle.



### STARTING SMALL

*(30 minutes)*

## First steps

Welcome participants and thank them for attending the final session of the Grandparents Circle. Let them know how much you have enjoyed meeting with them over the previous four sessions and hope that everyone in the group will remain in touch with one another and with you. Participants will have a chance to decide next steps for the group later in the session, but for now, participants will have a chance to discuss the first steps they will take or are already taking to nurture their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Ask participants to turn to the "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #4" worksheet from the last session. Have each participant share one way that they will begin nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities.

- ➔ **You may choose to lead the class in applause after each participant shares an initial step to nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities. These actions should be viewed as achievements for the participants and celebrated by the group.**

## Money talks

Tell participants that the previously suggested activities for Jewishly engaging their grandchildren were time-intensive but relatively inexpensive. Participants' strong relationships with their grandchildren will ultimately enable them to share Judaism with them. For those participants who are able to invest money in their grandchildren's identities (no matter whether the amount is large or small), Jewish memories can also be created by providing financial assistance for grandchildren to participate in Jewish activities. While this approach may be controversial for some participants, offering to subsidize their grandchildren's Jewish activities may be more about encouraging participation in these activities than about whether their adult children can afford to pay for them. Participants will have surely heard the phrase "money talks." Financially encouraging their grandchildren's participation in Jewish activities is about making their money whisper, subtly influencing the development of their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Participants should not bribe their grandchildren nor spend more money on them than they normally would. Financial encouragement is about offering their grandchildren Jewish choices. Most importantly, it is not a competition with their grandchildren's other grandparents.

### ➔ Distribute **Making Money Whisper: Five Ways to Give Jewish Gifts.**

Give participants a few minutes to look over the suggestions listed on the handout. Grandchildren should not be forced to take part in Jewish activities. Rather, participants can offer their grandchildren the opportunity to enjoy these activities and can gently encourage their grandchildren to give them a try. Participants should always notify their adult children of any such large financial gifts they plan to give their grandchildren. (Participants probably do not have to warn their adult children that hamantaschen will be arriving in the mail, but they do need to consult their adult children when making large offers, such as financing Jewish camp, religious school or preschool.) Hold a conversation about financial incentives using the following questions:

- What sorts of Jewish gifts have you given your grandchildren?
- ➔ **Encourage participants to use the categories listed on the handout to identify what sorts of Jewish gifts they have given their grandchildren. Have most gifts been small gifts related to the Jewish calendar or lifecycle? Have they given their grandchildren larger gifts, such as sponsorship of a Jewish education or travel that includes a visit to a Jewish site? Make sure that participants are aware that giving their grandchildren Jewish gifts does not need to be costly and that small gifts can have equally lasting impressions on their grandchildren as large gifts.**

- Have you offered your grandchildren large financial incentives, such as paying for Jewish summer camp or religious school? How did your adult children respond to this offer?
    - ➔ **If you feel that some participants in your group may feel uncomfortable with the idea of giving their grandchildren large financial incentives (or are unable to do so), you may choose to skip this question. Stress the importance of including adult children in their decisions to give their grandchildren Jewish gifts.**
  - What Jewish gifts would you like to give your grandchildren based on their interests?
    - ➔ **What have participants discovered their grandchildren's interests to be? How can they incorporate those interests into gifts? For example, for grandchildren who are environmentally conscious, participants can make a donation to Hazon, an organization that creates a healthier and more sustainable Jewish community, with them and on their behalf.**
  - How can you incorporate Jewish gifts into your existing plans to nurture your grandchildren's Jewish identities?
    - ➔ **Participants can look to the "Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #4" handout that they completed for this session and decide how a small or large financial gift could enhance the activity. For example, participants who live a far distance from their grandchildren, but would like to begin sharing Jewish stories with their grandchildren, may decide to mail their grandchildren Jewish books each month and then invest in a web camera so that they can read the books "in-person" to them.**
- 



## REMAINING OPTIMISTIC

*(30 minutes)*

### Jewish pride

Let participants know that you hope they are feeling positive about the potential to nurture Jewish identities in their grandchildren. Nevertheless, as positive and excited they may be about the next steps they plan to take with their grandchildren to better

engage them in Judaism, there will be times that they become frustrated. Whether it is because their adult children are unsupportive or that their grandchildren are simply uninterested (this may happen frequently during their teenage years), participants should not be distraught when their efforts go unfilled and/or unnoticed. Many small steps are required to nurture their grandchildren's Jewish identities. However, participants will have to step back frequently to gain perspective on the development of their grandchildren's Jewish identities. Grandchildren discover their Jewish pride at different points in their lives, so participants must be patient and always hopeful.

➔ **Distribute** 📄 **Remain Optimistic.**


Ask for a volunteer to read each passage. How can the stories and information included on the "Remain Optimistic" handout help them stay positive as they encourage their grandchildren to engage with Judaism? Encourage discussion using the following questions:

- What do the two passages have in common?
- ➔ **List participants' answers on the flip chart or white/chalkboard. Help participants come to the conclusions that: 1) Grandparents play a major role in nurturing Jewish identity in their grandchildren, and 2) Sometimes the results of their efforts take a long time to surface. They might not surface until their grandchildren reach adulthood.**
- How can the answers that we have listed on the flip chart help you to stay optimistic?
- ➔ **Participants should understand that their role in their grandchildren's Jewish upbringing is important. Their role is not diminished even if their grandchildren do not immediately, or fully, identify with Judaism.**
- How have your grandchildren affirmed their identification with some aspects of Judaism as a result of the steps you have taken to nurture their identities?
- ➔ **Some participants may not be able to answer this question at this time. Depending on your specific group of participants, you may choose not ask this question if you are already aware that they will not yet have answers to this question. Other participants may already be receiving the fruits of their labor in both large ("I want to have bar/bat mitzvah") and small ("Grandma, what are those triangular, jelly cookies called?") ways. Even if only a few participants can share their responses at this time, they can help the entire group remain hopeful.**



## How the Jewish community can help

Another way for participants to stay optimistic is by planning their next steps for engaging their grandchildren Jewishly. Participants should understand that the Jewish community can help them. There are many national and local Jewish resources that are available to participants and their grandchildren. Tell participants that you will now distribute the “Jewish Children’s Books” list that participants compiled in the last session. They can use this list along with a list of national and local Jewish community resources that you will provide to them to look for programs and information that can be of help to them and their grandchildren.

➔ **Distribute  Jewish Children’s Books and a list of Jewish community resources to participants. When compiling the list of community resources, keep the following types of organizations in mind:**

- **Local Jewish organizations** that program for grandparents and grandchildren, such as Jewish Family Services, the Jewish Community Center and local youth groups;
- **National Jewish programs** geared toward specific demographic populations, such as Shalom Baby, PJ Library and birthright israel;
- **National and local Jewish programs** that are not necessarily geared toward grandparents and their grandchildren but can be adapted if they are of interest. For example, grandparents can invite their grandchildren to Jewish book fairs and film festivals;
- **Local sites of Jewish interest**, such as Jewish museums or historic synagogues.

**You may also want to ask participants what Jewish resources they have found to be helpful and list those on the flip chart or white/chalkboard.**

Encourage participants to look to the Jewish community to help them reach out to their adult children and grandchildren. Participants may not be aware of existing local and national programs that might interest and attract their adult children and grandchildren. By getting involved in their local Jewish community, as they have with the Grandparents Circle, participants can gain support in nurturing their grandchildren’s Jewish identities. Participants can also become advocates for the inclusion of their adult children and grandchildren in the Jewish community.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

(30 minutes)

### Stay involved

Tell participants that advocating for the inclusion of their intermarried adult children and their families in the Jewish community is one way to stay involved with the Jewish community and remain connected to each other after the Grandparents Circle. As a group, how can participants stay in contact with one another following the program? What are their next steps as a group? Facilitate a discussion with participants about what they would like to do as a group as a next step after the Grandparents Circle program concludes.

➔ **Participants may already plan to keep in contact informally after the program is completed, but you can guide the group to make more formal plans. You may suggest that they take part in one or several of the following:**

- **A Grandparents Circle alumni group and/or book group;**
- **Jewish community advocacy on behalf of their adult children;**
- **Follow-up Jewish holiday programming for grandparents and their grandchildren;**
- **The Jewish Outreach Institute's established Grandparents Circle national listserve.**

### Evaluations

Ask participants what does it mean to nurture Jewish identity in their grandchildren? How has the Grandparents Circle helped them to do so? What activities and sessions have participants found to be most helpful?

➔ **Please write down these answers and share with JOI.**

➔ **Distribute  Post-Program Questionnaire and pens.**

Ask participants to be candid when filling out the evaluations so that the Jewish Outreach Institute, which developed the program, can continue to improve upon it. Invite participants to stay after this session to share impressions, questions and other thoughts with you about the Grandparents Circle.

- ➔ **Collect evaluations from participants. It is important that participants take time during this session to complete the evaluations. Do not send them home with participants.**

## Success

Tell participants that as they continue to engage their grandchildren Jewishly, they need to focus on the positive and celebrate every Jewish milestone and achievement. How can participants recognize and celebrate the ways their grandchildren connect and engage with Judaism? These moments may or may not be frequent, but they each deserve acknowledgement as they indicate the evolving Jewish identities of participants' grandchildren.

## Quick Jewish Grandparenting TIP #5

Remain optimistic. Remember to acknowledge how your grandchildren are Jewish, not how Jewish they are. Keep track of the ways your grandchildren connect to Judaism and refer back to them for your own personal inspiration and motivation.

- ➔ **Distribute  Quick Jewish Grandparenting Tip #5 handout which participants can take home.**

Thank participants for sharing of themselves and their challenges with you and the other participants in the Grandparents Circle. Let them know that this is only the beginning; nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities is an ongoing aspect of their relationships with their grandchildren. Tell participants that you look forward to being in touch with them and will see them soon.

- ➔ **You may want to remind them of their next step(s) as a group—either as an alumni group or a community advocacy group.**



## Making Money Whisper: Five Ways to Give Jewish Gifts

- 1 *Destination Judaism.*** With your adult children's consent, invite your grandchildren to travel with you to Jewish destinations either for a day trip or for longer vacations. Many communities throughout North America have a Jewish site or museum located within driving distance. When you travel without your grandchildren, send them postcards or bring them small souvenirs from Jewish sites. Be creative when choosing Jewish sites. For example, on a visit to New York, you can take your grandchildren to view the work of a Jewish artist at the Metropolitan Museum of Art instead of taking them to the Jewish Museum.
- 2 *Charitable Giving.*** Invite your grandchildren to begin making Jewish choices by helping you to decide on a charity to which you will donate and by giving the donations in their names. Incorporate your grandchildren's interests when choosing a charity to help them feel a personal connection to giving. Discuss any differences you may feel when you give to Jewish charities.
- 3 *Start Small.*** Offer to pay youth group dues or subsidize your grandchildren's attendance at a Jewish event. If you live in the same geographic area as do your grandchildren, you may want to offer to drive them there.
- 4 *Celebrate Jewish Participation.*** Encourage and celebrate your grandchildren's desire to take part in Jewish activities, such as Jewish summer camp, classes at the JCC and youth group. Offer to pay for part or all of these activities as a birthday or Hanukkah present.
- 5 *Take Advantage of the Jewish Calendar and Lifecycle.*** Send your grandchildren small gifts, such as books, DVDs and baked goods, to remind them about upcoming holidays. Use educational items to excite your grandchildren about Judaism.





## Remain Optimistic

**The following excerpts demonstrate the important role that grandparents play in nurturing their grandchildren's Jewish identities.**

1. From *Twenty Things for Grandparents of Interfaith Grandchildren to Do (And Not Do) to Nurture Jewish Identity in Their Grandchildren* by Kerry M. Olitzky and Paul Golin (Los Angeles: Torah Aura Productions, 2007), p. 19.

[Sidney, a Jewish grandfather, had] numerous 'incidents'—as he calls them...with his adult children regarding Judaism and his grandchildren. Each time he tried something, his children reacted negatively. Finally, they did accept his "gift" to send the grandkids to Jewish summer camp. And he says he knew it was all worth it when one of the kids (by then a sophomore in college) said to him; "Grandpa, thanks. I know that Mom and Dad did not make it easy for you. But that's okay, 'cause I never made it easy for them. But I wanted to let you know that while I think they were afraid to make a religious choice for me, you will be pleased to know that I have made one for myself. I have chosen to be a Jew.

2. From "A Flame Still Burns: The Dimensions and Determinants of Jewish Identity Among Young Adult Children of the Intermarried," by Dr. Pearl Beck, a research study of young adult children of intermarriage that examines their religious upbringing. Issued by the Jewish Outreach Institute (2005).

The majority of our respondents indicated that they had significant contact with their grandparents when they were growing up—and nearly 85% of them established strong relationships specifically with their Jewish grandparents. In the course of the interviews, many described the pivotal role played by grandparents in shaping their Jewish identities.

My grandfather waited until I was around eleven or twelve, when I was able to comprehend it a little more. And even as he was an influence, it was not by pushing or preaching. He enjoyed his spirituality, and he showed me how important it was to be Jewish, and how to maintain it.

Unfortunately, until recently, this important role has been overlooked by those studying religious development (Barack-Fishman, 2004), possibly because, as explained by one of the interviewees, a grandparent's influence is often not apparent until their grandchildren are older....



