

CREATING AN AFFIRMING & INCLUSIVE GREETER TRAINING

Greeters can make a powerful first impression on visitors and members of your community. Effective greeters can create a culture of inclusion and belonging for people from all backgrounds who enter your doors, whether they're members, prospective members, or visitors.

Conversely, lack of a greeting, or the wrong kind of greeting, can unintentionally marginalize individuals and families and signal the exact opposite of what we are aiming to communicate. It's worth noting that many of us from underrepresented backgrounds (Jews of Color, people who are trans/non-binary/gender expansive, single people, working class Jews, Jews with various body types/sizes, Jews with disabilities, etc.) are often unintentionally made to feel like we don't belong, are in the wrong place, or are not "real Jews". Given that so many of us feel obligated to prove our "Jewish authenticity" over and over, it is apparent why so many of us leave the organized Jewish community. Some simple education around creating an inclusive and affirming community from the very beginning can make a huge difference.

Therefore, an effective greeter training is essential to creating an impactful team of greeters. In addition to providing general information about greeters' roles and responsibilities at your congregation, it is key to ensure greeters always keep equity and inclusion in mind.

Below are some exercises that can be woven into your greeter training (or re-training).

Use the prompts below to facilitate important conversations.

- Why do people come to our congregation?
- What assumptions do we make about those who come to our congregation?
- How do we want our visitors and members to feel when they first enter the building?
- What role do greeters play in creating a culture of welcome, belonging, and connection in our synagogue?
- How can we best prepare to be effective greeters?

- How can we best prepare our facilities/resources, to compliment and support our effectiveness as greeters?
- In what ways—both verbally and non-verbally—do we convey a sense of belonging?
- How can we ensure that everyone who enters our congregation is greeted in an affirming way?
- How can we be inclusive to all, not assume anyone's level of knowledge/experience with Judaism, and differentiate each person's needs?

Research and contract a local DEI facilitator to conduct an anti-bias training for your greeters.

Review and discuss the [*How to Identify Microaggressions & The Importance of Disrupting Them*](#) a group.

- Ensure all greeters understand that Jews of Color make up at least 12-15% of the Jewish community and know to not ask those of us who are Jews of Color the harmful questions mentioned in the resource.

Read and discuss [*Black, Jewish, and Avoiding The Synagogue on Yom Kippur*](#)

Read and discuss [*9 Things to Consider When Creating an Inclusive Security Plan*](#)

Review the *Inclusive Language Resource* in the appendix of this resource and discuss how to incorporate this language into their work.

- Ensure greeters do not use language that assume someone's gender.
 - Note: Instead of assuming one's gender when giving directions to a bathroom or using honorifics for people we do not know (ex. Hello Miss/Mr., etc.), greeters should provide directions to all available bathrooms (including the all-gender, accessible bathroom, if one is available) and refrain from using gender-specific language if one's gender is not known.
- Ensure greeters do not make assumptions about family makeup, including whether someone has a spouse (and their spouse's gender) or if they plan to have children.
 - Note: Approximately 10% of the Jewish community identifies as LGBTQ+ and up to 20% of Jews ages 18-29.

Review the following disabilities inclusion tips.

- Speak directly to the person with a disability rather than to a family member, aide, or sign language interpreter whenever possible.
- Place kippot, siddurim (prayer books), texts, and any other literature being distributed, at a level that can be reached by everyone.
- To avoid causing embarrassment, disorientation or a loss of balance that can lead to a fall, ask if assistance is needed rather than physically guiding a person who is blind or using a walker or cane.

- Think creatively about how to provide space in other rooms where people of all ages may go if they need a break from services because of sensory overload, allergy to fragrances, restlessness, or emotional distress.
- Invite feedback through emails, registration, membership forms, in bulletins, and in handouts at services.

Below you will find more comprehensive guidelines and resources that enhance your inclusion efforts. We suggest reviewing them with your Greeters:

- [Inclusive Program Checklist](#)
- [URJ & Keshet Trans Inclusion Guide](#)
- [A Quick Guide to Pronouns](#)
- Respectability.org Resources
 - [Faith & Belonging](#)
 - [Jewish Inclusion Events](#)

Engaging with a person whose name you don't remember, or you don't recognize		
Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
Nothing Is this your first time here? Are you new?	I forget names sometimes, I'm (your name & pronouns). Sorry if we've met before, my name is____& my pronouns are_____ How was the service/event for you?	It is alienating to be ignored or assumed to be new. This person might be a longtime member, but just is not someone you have crossed paths with

When you don't know what pronouns to use for someone

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
<p>Are you a man or a woman?</p> <p>Using he/she pronouns when you're unsure</p>	<p>Sorry if we've met before, my name is ___ and my pronouns are___ (or any of the above)</p> <p>What are your pronouns? I use (e.g., she/her; they/them)</p>	<p>It's polite to address people with their correct pronouns, and hurtful to assume or guess someone's gender or pronouns.</p>

Engaging with a person you don't know who may not appear to be White...

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
<p>Are you Jewish?</p> <p>When did you convert?</p> <p>Let me introduce you to (insert Community Member of Color)</p> <p>Are you related to (insert Community Member of Color)?</p>	<p>Sorry if we've met before, my name is _____ and my pronouns are _____ (or any of the above)</p>	<p>There are Jews of all races & ethnicities</p> <p>Making assumptions about people based on their race can cause people to feel singled out & alienated</p> <p>Many Congregants of Color have experienced racism in Jewish communities, especially being treated like they don't belong.</p>

Engaging with a person you don't know with a visible disability

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
How can I help you?	Sorry if we've met before, my name is ____ and my pronouns are ____ (or any of the above)	Many people with disabilities find that people focus on their disability and assume they need help, which is often not the case. People mostly like to be treated like you would treat anyone else, unless they specifically ask for support.

When engaging with someone whom you don't know their relationship status, sexuality, if they want to have children

Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
Are married? When are you going to have children? Do you have a husband/wife?	Sorry if we've met before, my name is ____ and my pronouns are ____ (or any of the above)	<p>These questions perpetuate the assumption that being married and having children are expected and something everyone should be working towards.</p> <p>This question can communicate that you are assuming one's life is incomplete without a partner. Relationships and children are very personal choices and neither guarantee happiness.</p> <p>Avoid assuming the gender or gendered title (wife/husband) of anyone's partner.</p>

When engaging with someone you haven't seen in a while whose body has changed (weight gain/loss/etc.)		
Avoid saying...	Say instead...	Why?
<p>You lost weight! You look amazing! What's your secret?</p> <p>Oh, I wish you met me last year, I was so much thinner!</p> <p>I could never wear a sleeveless dress; my arms are too fat.</p> <p>Nice to see you! I worked out today so I'm going to be bad and indulge in the Shabbat dessert reception... see you inside!</p>	<p>It's great to see you!</p>	<p>Despite good intentions, focusing on physical appearance often leads to unnecessary and objectifying comments. These questions perpetuate the assumption that being thin is ideal and good and that someone always intentionally loses weight, (not considering it could be a sign of illness, health challenges, an eating disorder, life stress, etc.).</p> <p>Self-deprecating comments about your own body has implications and effects on others. It may seem innocuous to make a comment about yourself, but others around you may be taking in the message and internalizing it on their own bodies.</p> <p>In addition, talking about "earning dessert" or "being bad" with food creates an unnecessary morality around food and eating habits, and fuels diet culture.</p>

Credit:

Adapted from Kol Tzedek Synagogue, Friends General Conference and the Unitarian Universalist Association

Appendix:

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE RESOURCE

Language that Assumes	Language that doesn't Assume
Men and women	People, staff, colleagues, faculty, participants, members, supporters
Boys and girls	Children, young people, campers, students
Brothers and sisters	Siblings (use on its own) or list "sisters, brothers and siblings" (be sure to alternate the order)
Son and daughter	Child, adult child, my oldest/youngest/middle, offspring
Mothers and fathers	Parents, guardians
Women who are pregnant or nursing	Those who are pregnant or nursing
Husband and wife	Spouse, partner, co-parent
Sir, ma'am, miss, and ms.	Use the person's name. Say "excuse me" or "hello" to get someone's attention.
Ladies and gentlemen	All, everyone
Grandmother & grandfather	Grandparents
You guys	Everyone, y'all, folks
S/He	They, the individual
Bar and/or Bat Mitzvah	B mitzvah, B'nai mitzvah

Non-inclusive Language	Inclusive Language
Confined to a wheelchair/walker	Use a wheelchair/walker
Suffers from [insert disability] Struggles with [insert disability]	Lives with [insert disability] Has [insert disability]
Is crazy/wacko/insane/ retarded/etc.	<i>Terms that should not be used</i>
Is so OCD/bipolar/etc.	<i>Terms that should not be used derisively</i>