

Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

A Guide to Welcoming All in Your Congregation,
Community, and Beyond



Pilot Edition

Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

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Welcome to the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit: Forward to the Pilot Edition

“The old must be renewed and the new must be made holy.”

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook

B'ruchim habaim! Welcome to the pilot version of the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit, a “how-to” guide for practicing audacious hospitality.

What is Audacious Hospitality?

Audacious Hospitality is one of the four core priorities of the Union for Reform Judaism’s (URJ) 2020 Vision. The URJ actively works to engage uninspired and unaffiliated Jews, partnering with congregations and other Reform Movement institutions to eliminate the barriers that prevent people from finding their place in Jewish life.

We recognize that Jewish diversity in all its hues is no longer a wave, but the ocean of Jewish life. As we acknowledge the contemporary demographic shifts of the Jewish people and embrace our full diversity, we seek to create opportunities for learning that strengthen our relationships with one another and build meaningful Jewish communities.

We actively embrace interfaith families, Jews of Color, LGBTQ Jews, and Jews with disabilities and help them nurture their Jewish identities. We welcome all.

A Brief History

The work of Audacious Hospitality at the URJ is a continuation of decades of cutting edge inclusion and outreach. The roots of Audacious Hospitality began in the 1970s when Rabbi Alexander Schindler created Reform Jewish Outreach. The URJ (then called the Union of American Hebrew Congregations) and Reform congregations throughout North America heeded his call and began to listen to the needs of those in our communities who were not being heard. This included many individuals considering becoming Jewish, as well as interfaith couples who did not see conversion as an option but were considering raising Jewish families. They were asked about the barriers they experienced. What made them feel welcome? What made them feel distant? What could be done to bring them close? This collaborative process provided invaluable insights, much of which serves as the foundation for Audacious Hospitality today.

As the demographic landscape of North America continues to shift, so too does the collective identity of the Jewish people. Jewish populations that require our attention—such as Jews by choice and those exploring Judaism; interfaith couples and families; Jews of Color; Jews who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and/or queer; Jews who live with physical, mental, or intellectual disabilities; multiracial families; Millennials; the aging Jewish population; and Jews who are unaffiliated and uninspired by current Jewish communal offerings—should be made visible and must be supported directly in our congregations and communities. As the largest movement of Jews in North America, we cannot stand idly by as we witness the need to widen the circle and engage more groups of people who are often unrecognized and underserved in Jewish communal spaces.

The goal of Audacious Hospitality, therefore, is to build on the historical success of past outreach efforts while challenging the status quo of Jewish life today. When we fully meet the needs of those on the margins of the Jewish community we strengthen the Reform Movement and North American Jewry.

Who Is the Intended User of the Toolkit?

The toolkit was designed with a range of prospective users in mind, including clergy, staff, lay leaders, educators, and members of the community! The pilot version offers best principles and practices to begin the work of creating inclusive congregations and communities. Forthcoming modules will include additional resources designed to address the needs of specific individuals and groups in our community. The toolkit can help if:

- You are a **clergy member** who is figuring out how to best meet the needs of a newly-engaged interfaith couple and their family
- Or a **congregation member** who feels a deep commitment to being in relationship with other members of the congregation and hopes to affect communal and social change
- You are a **ritual committee chair** who is making an effort to adapt ritual practices for transgender members of your congregation
- Maybe you are the **board president** concerned about decreasing membership numbers as you work to create vibrant and accessible programming in your community
- Or you're an **executive director** unsure of how to have difficult conversations when people cannot afford to belong to your synagogue or you need to lead a process of designing a bimah that is wheelchair accessible that might not be feasible at this time
- As an **early childhood education director**, you might be seeking ways to create inclusive communities—through programming or curricula—that fully celebrate the diversity of your families.

The Audacious Hospitality Toolkit is one means of realizing the URJ's vision of full engagement with the diversity of the Jewish people of North America. What you will find in the pilot toolkit is a guide designed to take you through the early stages of Audacious Hospitality's vision, principles, and practices as you work to support the diversity of needs and identity in modern Jewish life.

Please keep in mind that, just as the Jewish people are fluid and shifting, so too are our resources and educational materials. The Audacious Hospitality Toolkit is a living document. We are continuously updating, revising, and, with your feedback, developing resources needed to support your efforts to create a more whole, just, and compassionate world. We know that turning inward to take inventory of how our congregations operate to create communities of full accessibility and inclusion is not an easy task. The toolkit, however, is designed to meet you where you are in the work of Audacious Hospitality and guide you, step by step, as you work to implement incremental changes over time.

It is our honor to engage in this sacred work with you as we journey together to foster vibrant, diverse communities that offer their members meaning and connection.

Introduction—What is Audacious Hospitality?

A key element of the URJ's 2020 Vision, Audacious Hospitality is the focused effort to embrace our diversity and reach out to those not currently engaged in Jewish life. The URJ believes that everyone can feel at home in the Jewish community and that Judaism must meet people where they are today to thrive tomorrow. As a movement, we stand for a Judaism that is inclusive and open. We believe that there is more than one authentic way to be Jewish. Audacious Hospitality is a transformative spiritual practice rooted in the belief that we will be a stronger, more vibrant Jewish community when we fully welcome and incorporate the diversity that is the reality of modern Jewish life.



Programs and Initiatives:

Audacious Hospitality is a new initiative in its early phase of development. As such, we are continually creating new innovative and strategic initiatives as we work to expand our reach. Examples of our current work include:

Outreach and Engagement:

- **Introduction to Judaism and Taste of Judaism:** Introduction to Judaism is a 18-session formal course for those interested in exploring Judaism. Introduction to Judaism serves 14 cities across the US. In 2017, an online class was made available for those individuals and families without a Reform congregation nearby. Taste of Judaism is a three-session course engaging participants on topics such as Jewish spirituality, ethics, and community, designed for the curious beginner.
- **Consulting and Expertise:** Audacious Hospitality staff members are routinely requested as guest speakers, lecturers, and presenters at gatherings large and small across the country. As we grow, we expect that Audacious Hospitality staff will continue to engage as consultants and partners with external organizations to further the work of building a more whole, just, and compassionate world.

Leadership Development:

- **JewV'Nation Fellowship:** JewV'Nation is a year-long fellowship that supports emerging and accomplished leaders in developing and incubating innovative Jewish outreach initiatives. The Fellowship is funded by a grant from the Genesis Philanthropy Group and a URJ donor in collaboration with the Jewish Funders Network.
- **URJ Youth Keshet Leadership Institute** (*In partnership with the Religious Action Center and Keshet*) In recognition of the passage of the Transgender Inclusion Resolution, the URJ launched an LGBT Inclusion Leadership Project. It is a year-long, multi-phase program that kicks off with the Leadership Summit, a dynamic, experiential day-long program designed to build the capacity of organizational leadership teams.

Resources and Education:

- **Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center:** In partnership with the Ruderman Family Foundation, the Learning Center offers Reform professionals resources to develop additional skills, strategies, and understanding to make full participation of people with disabilities in congregational and communal life possible.
- **Active Learning Networks (ALN) include:** A joint Audacious Hospitality initiative in partnership with the Religious Action Center, Keshet, the Youth and Gender Media Project, and transgender members of the Jewish community to provide education and resources on advancing transgender inclusion efforts in our congregations. Audacious Hospitality Toolkit ALN offered to congregations across North America to actively review and discuss the toolkit resources and consider the use of these resources for their individual congregations.
- **Audacious Hospitality Toolkit—Pilot Edition:** Comprehensive educational resources that support congregational clergy, lay leaders, and members to create a more welcoming, diverse, and supportive experience of Jewish life.

Six Guiding Principles of Audacious Hospitality



Open Tent

Ohel Patuach אוהל פתוח

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments.



Watchfulness & Assessment

Z'hirut זהירות

Strategies for observation and evaluation.



Knowledge & Self-Awareness

Daat V'hitlamdut דעת והתלמדות

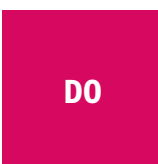
Deepening our practice of being in sacred partnership with one another.



Honoring Diversity

Kavod כבוד

Realizing our full potential with honor, respect, dignity, in congregational and communal life.



Courage & Compassion

Ometz Lev V'rachamim אומץ-לב ורחמים

“When the rubber meets the road.”

Developing strategies for difficult moments.



Leadership and Justice

Hanhagah V'tzedek הנהגה וצדק

Next steps in leadership and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

Learning Objectives of the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit

The toolkit is designed to help you meet the following learning objectives:

1. **Increase awareness** of the diversity and difference represented by the individuals, families, groups, and communities in North American Jewish life.
2. **Gain knowledge** of the strengths, needs, and challenges of those who are in your congregation and community, and those seeking to belong.
3. **Deepen relationships** and strengthen the commitment to widening the circle of affiliation in your community through the practice of audacious hospitality.
4. **Identify opportunities** to implement inclusion efforts among the most vulnerable congregants and community members, especially those who have been historically or are currently marginalized from fully participating in Jewish life.
5. **Empower leadership** among youth and adults to take ownership and responsibility in the work of audacious hospitality and the broader work of social justice and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world).

Suggested Guide for Use— A Roadmap to Practicing Audacious Hospitality

The Audacious Hospitality Toolkit is designed to offer effective and comprehensive inclusion principles, practices, and skills that enable us to connect more deeply, foster greater understanding among one another, and facilitate more meaningful and memorable experiences in congregations and communities.

To best serve your needs as a community, we recommend the following:

1. Do not go at this alone! There is a lot of material to comb through, and we suggest you choose a partner or form a small working group to review the toolkit materials.
2. Take time to read through the toolkit from start to finish. Since the toolkit is developed based on the six guiding principles of Audacious Hospitality, you might want to divide the reading among the group, and review together at a later time.
3. Designate one or multiple meeting times for participants to report back on what they learned, what interested them, and what they anticipate being a challenge.
4. Identify as a group what topic is a priority to further explore and address.
5. Participate in the [Audacious Hospitality Pilot Toolkit Active Learning Network](#) (May 4–June 29, 2017). Congregations from across North America will participate in five 90-minute webinars offered over the course of ten weeks. Participants will form a network to actively review and discuss the toolkit resources and consider the use of these resources for their individual congregations.
6. The toolkit is a springboard for learning, ongoing training, and leadership development. Stay in touch for information about programs and trainings as they become available.



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WELCOME

First steps in creating warm and welcoming environments



Welcome: An Overview

“In your light, we see light.”

Psalms 36:10

Jewish tradition places a premium on the importance of *hachnasat orchim*, welcoming guests. In fact, it is considered a mitzvah (a commandment) to welcome guests into your home.

In the following biblical passage, the patriarch Abraham sets a standard for welcoming guests:

“Looking up, [Abraham] saw three men standing near him. As soon as he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them and, bowing to the ground, he said, ‘My lords, if it please you, do not go on past your servant.’” (Genesis 18:2-3) With a great sense of urgency, he ran to the three men to offer them food, drink, and a place to rest.

When we welcome guests into our congregations, schools, and institutions, we expect that our values will be apparent in what our guests see (the environment), what they hear (our language), and what we do (our actions). It is our intention to create multiple opportunities for building deep and meaningful relationships that foster a sense of connection and understanding. Through these relationships and welcoming practices, we recognize and honor the multiple identities we all hold. Collectively, it is our responsibility to uplift our unique experiences and shared values as we build communities where we feel comfortable with one another, relaxing, sharing meals, praying, and learning together.

Considering the principle of *ohel patuach*, an open tent, we must reach beyond the work of welcoming and open our doors, hearts, and minds to those wishing to be a part of a Jewish community. When we invite people into our congregations, the hope is that we do so with the intention of building lifelong, meaningful, and sacred relationships.

In this section, we take a closer look at points of first contact. In what ways can we create a culture of inclusion and acceptance? How do we create a welcoming physical environment? How can our greeters and ushers create an atmosphere of welcome? What role do our members play in strengthening connection and meaning among one another? Along with online and on-the-ground trainings, these resources are meant to support and guide you in the beginning steps of practicing Audacious Hospitality.

Welcome: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious Hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם, אשר קדשנו
במצותיו, וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Genesis 18:1-5.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. “The Eternal appeared to him [Abraham] by the oaks of Mamre as he was sitting at the entrance of the tent at about the hottest time of the day. | 1. וירא אליו יהוה באילני ממרא והוא ישב פתח-האהל כחם היום. |
| 2. Looking up, he saw: lo—three men standing opposite him! Seeing them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to meet them, and bowing down to the ground, | 2. וישא עיניו וירא והנה שלשה אנשים נצבים עליו וירא וירץ לקראתם מפתח האהל וישתחו ארצה. |
| 3. he said, My lords, if I have found favor in your sight, please do not pass your servant by. | 3. ויאמר אדני אם-נא מצאתי חן בעיניך אל נא תעבר מעל עבדיך. |
| 4. Let a little water be brought; then wash your feet and recline under a tree, | 4. יקח נא מעט מים ורחצו רגליכם והשענו תחת העץ. |
| 5. and let me bring a bit of bread and you can restore yourselves. Then you can go on—now that you have come across your servant. ...” | 5. ואקחה פת לחם וסעדו לבכם אחר תעברו כי על כן עברתם על-עבדכם ויאמרו כן תעשה כאשר דברת. |
- a. How could we, today, show newcomers the level of hospitality that Abraham is demonstrating in this text?
- b. Are Abraham’s actions completely altruistic? What benefits does he incur through his hospitality?
- c. What makes Abraham’s actions unique and notable? What prevents us—as individuals or as a community—from being fully welcoming? How do we celebrate and encourage welcoming actions by members of our community?

Genesis Rabbah 100:7. “ A society and a family are like a pile of stones. If you remove one stone, the pile will collapse. If you add a stone to it, it will stand.”

- a. Who may be feeling removed from our community? What steps can we take to welcome them?
- b. How are we made stronger by including those currently outside of our circle?

Leviticus 19:18. And you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

- a. How do we define who our neighbors are? How has this changed in the last generation?
- b. Where could we be lacking love for ourselves as a community? (Sometimes the question, “Why would anyone want to be Jewish?” arises; how do we address this?)
- c. Do you have any resistance to being commanded to love your neighbor? What resistance could this community have to welcoming those who have felt unwelcome in the past? How do we challenge that resistance in ourselves and as a community?



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A Welcoming Culture

Leaders at almost every congregation would say their congregation strives to be a “welcoming community.” The challenge, of course, is how to put that into practice. Your congregation’s clergy, leadership, values, and policies set the tone for practicing Audacious Hospitality. Member-to-member relationships, however, will ultimately determine the welcoming culture of a community. Ideally, welcoming guests is a sacred obligation that should be embraced by every member of the community. The reality is that, for any number of reasons, it takes real effort and intention to reach out to people whom we don’t know, are new to our community, or appear different than us. There are steps you can take as you and your community work on creating a welcoming culture.

Ten Practices to Try at Your Next Synagogue Gathering

1. **Smile.** A friendly face can go a long way to helping everyone feel that they can participate fully in congregational life. As Shammai, the Talmudic Rabbi taught, “greet every person with a cheerful face” (*Pirkei Avot* 1:15).
2. **Widen your circle.** Greet everyone you pass or everyone who comes within a few feet of you. A simple “hello” or “Shabbat Shalom” will do the trick.
3. **Take five.** Spend the first five minutes after the conclusion of a program or service talking to people you don’t already know, whether newcomers or long-time members with whom you’ve yet to connect. At times, informal schmoozing can be awkward for anyone who doesn’t have a friend by their side. This is especially true for newcomers to your community. The transition time between the end of a program or service and an informal coffee hour or *oneg* is when people are likely to dash for the door. Encourage people to stay and help them feel more comfortable by spending time talking with them.
4. **Naming names.** Not sure where to begin? Try a straightforward, “Hi, I’m... What’s your name?” Repeat their name back to them to be sure you heard it right, and to help it stick with you. Maybe you’re sure you’ve met this person before but you’re not sure of their name. Honesty is the best policy. Preface your introduction with, “I’m sorry, I’ve forgotten your name...,” or “Tell me your name again...” If their name is difficult for you pronounce, admit it, apologize, and practice until you get it right.

5. **New-ish?** Not sure if they are new to the community or just new to you? Begin your introduction with, “I’m not sure if we’ve met before...,” or ask, “Have we met before?” When you are introduced to someone, try, “Nice to see you” rather than “nice to meet you,” just in case you’ve actually met each other once (or several times!) before.
6. **Just listen!** Don’t assume you know or can tell someone’s gender identity; family make-up; religious, racial, or cultural background; or Jewish identity. Rather, take a curious stance, and allow time and space for people to share more about themselves on their own terms: when they want to, what they want to, and in the way they want to.
7. **What’s next?** Not sure what to say next? Consider offering a small piece of relevant information about yourself and the congregation. For example, “I’ve been a member here for a long time. I love our rabbi,” or, “I moved here about a year ago.” You can also try an innocuous statement like, “I love when the choir participates.” Share something positive or neutral. Please don’t bond over a shared complaint.
8. **Introduce.** Introduce them to someone else you know, or offer to introduce them to lay leaders or your rabbi or cantor. You can ask, “Have you met our rabbi? Would you like me to introduce you?” And, yes, it’s okay if they decline your offer.
9. **A little goes a long way.** After you’ve had an initial conversation, give them space by saying “nice to talk with you,” or something similar, as you leave.
10. **Follow up.** Next time you see the person, go over to them and say hello. Refer back to one or two details of your initial conversation to remind them who you are. You can ask a warm and friendly question such as, “How is your child liking her new school?” or “How did you find Shabbat services last week?” Being remembered and seen goes a long way to building a culture of connection and belonging.

How to Make Small Talk

Small talk, may seem just that—small. However, small talk is a big deal and an important skill in creating a culture of welcome and inclusion in our congregations and communities! San Francisco based rabbi and educator, Rabbi Ruth Adar, shares with us her small but mighty tips for making meaningful and beneficial small talk.

After watching people at many synagogue gatherings over the years, I am convinced that one reason some members don't talk to newcomers is that they never learned how to "small talk." Small talk is an important skill when I am interested in building my community. Small talk is also a way to fulfill the mitzvot of hospitality and kindness, by making someone comfortable at my synagogue or gathering.

The next time you see someone standing alone at the *Oneg Shabbat* (cookies, etc after services), here are some tips.

1. **Begin with common ground.** You are looking to connect with another person. Go for the things you have in common, rather than the differences. "Wow, long line for the coffee! By the way, I'm Ruth." is not great literature, but the long coffee line is something you have in common. The room, the weather, the service you both attended, the speaker – all are potential opening moves. Avoid divisive topics (politics, for instance) and don't focus on ways the newcomer is different. An alternative, if you can't think of a common ground, is simply to say, "Hi, I'm Ruth—have we met?"
2. **Volunteer one piece of info.** "I teach Intro to Judaism classes in Berkeley," is a simple beginning, but it gives them a comforting advantage: they know my name and something about me. It also gives them an easy comeback, "Hi, Ruth, I'm Joe and I am visiting from Cleveland." This is not the time for major autobiography, though – offer one or two conversational "hooks" and then settle in to listen and find out who they are.
3. **Go slow.** Repeat the person's name and ask for more about the thing they told you: "Nice to meet you, Joe! What brings you to my town?" Or you can share more about yourself if you see common ground: "Joe, my grandfather grew up in Cleveland! The family name was Levi, and they were members at the Temple in Cleveland." Chat a bit, pay attention. Listening is more important than talking. How long you chat depends on the two of you: if it's interesting and comfortable, you might chat a while. If you can't seem to connect with this person, then move on to Step 4:
4. **Make sure they meet other people.** Introduce them to someone else, providing one piece of information about them if possible. This gives you another opportunity to use the newcomer's name, which increases the chance you'll remember it: "Joe, I'd like you to meet Adam. Adam sings in the choir. Adam, Joe is visiting from Cleveland." It also assures that the newcomer will meet more than one person there. If they let you know they are looking for a synagogue, you may want to introduce them to the rabbi, the membership chair, or someone on the temple board.
5. **Make your exit.** One graceful way to move away from another person is by saying, "It was nice to meet you, Joe. I need to..." and then fill the blank with anything from "Get some water" to "leave early this evening" or "talk with someone." The idea is to let them know that you enjoyed meeting them, and that something is now drawing you regretfully away. If you can leave them with someone new to talk to, that's the best scenario.

For the newcomer, all the same rules apply: Start with the setting, introduce yourself ("coming out" as a visitor or newbie), pay attention and repeat names, and look for common conversational ground. If there's something you want to know, ask.

Most congregations advertise themselves as "welcoming." To be truly welcoming, though, a congregation needs to acknowledge and engage the people who come in the door. That takes small talk, the social skill that is not really so small.

Reprinted with permission from Rabbi Ruth Adar—coffeeshoprabbi.com.



Membership Through the Lens of Audacious Hospitality: A Primer

Strengthening Membership Engagement

Many North American Jews belong to a synagogue on and off over various points during their lives. Some might join because of a lifecycle event or for their child's early childhood or religious education; others might typically feel marginalized and join to so they can feel like they are part of a community. There are other reasons for joining a congregation, of

course, but among these two cohorts in particular, attendance and engagement are often intermittent at best, and their sense of belonging and contributing to the community is limited.

Robust congregations provide a welcoming culture and elicit a high level of engagement by understanding the meaning of membership, and understanding the mindset of those who are all too often minimally engaged or totally disengaged but *want* to be more involved. Clergy, staff, and lay leaders commonly think to themselves, "What do we need to do to get more of our congregants involved with our synagogue life?" Rather than trying to answer this question, consider digging deeper to uncover the way in which congregants view themselves in relation to the larger synagogue community.

Take time, either individually or as a group, to reflect on the following questions.

These are questions that members who are not feeling secure and certain of their place in a congregation might be asking.

1. **Do I fit in here?** Have I found a smaller group with which I identify? (e.g. religious school, parent group, Sisterhood, youth group, social action committee, etc.) Disengaged or under-engaged congregants often feel uninspired and misunderstood, and usually have not found people within the synagogue setting with whom they share values, ideologies, and identities. They may not feel like they "fit in."
2. **Who knows my name?** Have congregants found friends inside the congregation? Do many people know them and their families, and ask about them? Congregants who do not feel like they belong usually have not found friends within the synagogue setting. They may feel like strangers or outcasts.
3. **What difference can I make?** Do congregants feel valued and noticed? Active congregants feel they matter to the congregational community. By feeling that they matter, they feel that their contributions matter. Congregants who do not feel like they matter may not feel like they should or are allowed to contribute their gifts and talents to the synagogue. Because they sense that they do not matter to others, they choose to spend their time where they find recognition and support.
4. **What's in it for me?** How can members receive the full benefits of congregational life? When members are committed to congregational life, it is often because they feel the intangible benefits of belonging, such as a sense of community, spiritual growth, new friends, and engaged learning. If congregants do not feel this sense of belonging, it is quite challenging to have a strong, committed, and engaged community. Our work is to cultivate a community that provides opportunities for people to feel full honored and included.

5. **What's required of me?** How can members feel called to action if they are unsure of what is expected of them? Similar to ensuring members feel they matter (see number three), we must be sure those who are uninspired and unengaged know the work of Audacious Hospitality necessitates an active partnership. Include people from underserved cohorts in the planning process of events, activities, and initiatives, and set realistic expectations. Let them know what work is required of them; this can help them feel they have a stake in the matter, emboldening them to use their talents and experience to strengthen the congregational community.

The New Member Experience

Do you remember what it is like to be a new member? If you are serving in a leadership position, you may not remember what it is like to be new to the community: learning about rituals and customs and making friends. The reality is it takes a significant amount of time and concerted effort to find your footing in a congregation; some congregational leaders recognize new members as new for their first three years of membership.

This exercise is intended to help you recall your own experience and listen to others' experiences as a way of igniting your empathy for those at the start of their journey. This exercise will also help focus on what the synagogue does well with regard to recruiting and welcoming prospective members, as well as integrating new members into congregational life, and where the congregation could improve.

On your own or in a group, answer the following questions:

Tell Your Own Story

1. What motivated you to find a congregation?
2. What obstacles were in your way?
3. How did you find out about this synagogue?
4. What attracted you to this synagogue?
5. What does your experience reveal about this synagogue's outreach efforts?

Listen to the Stories of those Around You

As a group, share the answers to the following questions:

1. What were your initial impressions of this synagogue?
2. What was your first year experience like?
3. What, if anything, does your collective experience reveal about what happens to new members in this congregation?

Make sure to record this valuable information. This is qualitative data that you can use to inform next steps and an action plan.

Exceeding the Expectations of New Members

Synagogues and other Jewish institutions receive inquiries about membership daily. As we work to move our initial experience of engagement from a transactional model to a transformational model, we should strive to exceed expectations of inquiring and new members. From the first encounter on the phone to a visit to the congregation, there are steps we can take to begin building relationships steeped in meaning and understanding that will help create vibrant and strong congregations and communities.

Expectations

- Calls for information are followed by a membership packet via mail or email.
- Inquiries about membership trigger the following actions:
 - Phone call from executive director
 - Invitation to services and *Oneg Shabbat*
- Guests are greeted
- Prospective members are asked about committees they might want to join
- New members are informed about dues and the activities and events to which their dues entitle them

Exceeding Expectations

- Calls for information are followed by a personal phone call from the rabbi to the prospective member(s)
- A greeter identifies invited guest(s) and answers their questions
- Inquiries about membership trigger the following actions:
 - Invitation to someone's home for lunch
 - Customized membership packet is sent
- Guests are recognized and welcomed from the pulpit and by congregants seated next to them
- New members are asked about their Jewish journey by either clergy or a designated lay leader trained to engage in such conversations
- New members are informed about the synagogue as a spiritual community and what that means by clergy or lay leaders empowered to share this information

Adapted with permission Sacred Community, rev. ed. (New York: Synagogue 2000, 2001).

Five Qualities of Effective Greeters

Meeting someone *panim el panim* (face-to-face) and *yad b'yad* (hand-to-hand) fosters a genuine and authentic connection with that person, and greeters can help. Greeters have an opportunity to make a first impression on visitors to your community, showing that someone is present and open to their needs. Effective greeters contribute to a welcoming congregational culture and lay a foundation for the rest of the congregation to connect and create meaning with one another.

The following attributes of effective greeters are identified as foundational qualities for creating cultures of authentic welcome.

1. **Accepting the other:** The unconditional acceptance of whomever walks into the synagogue is the hallmark of a culture of community. Everyone is made in the image of God. Everyone deserves to be accepted into the community. By offering a handshake and a smile, the gestures say, “You are welcome here.” Even if the congregant or visitor responds coldly, it is the task of the greeter “to receive” the person, whatever their state of mind is at the time.
2. **Recognizing the other:** It takes little effort to say a kind word to people as they enter the sanctuary. In addition to the appropriate greeting of the day (“Shabbat Shalom,” “Happy Holidays,” et al.), add a word or two of a personal nature—“How are the kids?” “How’s your mom doing?”—to recognize the other.
3. **Uplifting the other:** Sometimes people come to the synagogue in search of encouragement, comfort, and peace. Perhaps they have had a frustrating week. They may be coming to say *Kaddish* for a loved one. Show tenderness and kindness to those who come to shul.
4. **Teaching the other:** By greeting everyone warmly, you will establish a climate of welcome in the assembled group. Your model of greeting may well be picked up by others, and can be encouraged from the pulpit. For example, the rabbi can invite everyone to “turn and greet” one another at some point during the service.
5. **Attending to the needs of the other:**
 - The physically lost—Someone who is new to your congregation might be embarrassed to ask where certain things (like the restrooms, the junior congregation, or the babysitter) are, or they might be nervous about asking for or putting on a yarmulke or tallit. Be on the lookout for those newcomers who don’t know where anything is in the building.
 - People with disabilities—People who are disabled may need special help getting into the sanctuary, settled in their seat, or something else.
 - Children – Some synagogues provide quiet toys and books children can use during services. Others (or, sometimes, the same congregations) have an on-site babysitter or “crying room.” Be ready to assist children and parents in getting and remaining comfortable throughout the service.
 - The elderly—The frail and/or elderly might need a helping hand or guidance.

What other attributes can you identify that make for an effective greeter?

We encourage you to brainstorm your ideas: write them below, discuss them as a group, and/or feel free to share your process and responses with us in the Audacious Hospitality group in the Tent, and don’t forget to tag them #EffectiveGreeter.

Greeters and Ushers—A Self-Reflection

Greeters and ushers have long been a staple of congregational life. Often, they are members of the synagogue board, committee members, or other congregants who play a role in their congregation's leadership and religious life. Greeters and ushers are typically placed outside of the synagogue entrance, at the front door, in the lobby, and at the entrance of the sanctuary and social hall. They serve as a point of first contact with new members, prospective members, and outside visitors, as well as with veteran members and old friends. Despite this commitment to engagement, it is not uncommon to hear members new and old alike say, "No one ever says hello to me." How can this be? At times, greeters and ushers might focus more on policing, monitoring synagogue decorum, and ensuring safety than actually working to create a culture of connection and meaning between congregants. While those greeter/usher responsibilities are important, so is saying hello.

Take time to consider and answer the following questions to begin (re)thinking the role of greeters and ushers in your congregation. Plan to discuss in pairs or small groups ways in which you would like your greeters to serve your community.

What role do greeters and ushers play in creating a culture of welcome and connection in your synagogue?

1. Why do people come to our synagogue?
2. How do we want our visitors/members to feel when they first enter the synagogue or sanctuary?
3. In what ways—both verbally and non-verbally—do we convey a sense of welcome and belonging?
4. How do we prepare ourselves for doing the work of greeting?
5. What assumptions do we make about those who choose to come to our synagogue?
6. In what ways can we be inclusive to all, not assume a level of knowledge about Judaism, and differentiate needs?

Office Staff and Volunteers—Beyond Shalom

Your Synagogue Office's Guide to Connecting with Warmth and Welcome

In many congregations, office and administrative staff (and volunteers) are often the first point of contact for many callers and visitors. Those who work in the office, from the receptionist to the rabbi, are engaged in a sacred endeavor. They have the unique opportunity to touch the lives of people in your community. The person who answers your telephone, responds to email inquiries, and greets visitors who enter your building is an ambassador representing your community. The warmth, welcome, and knowledge that your staff provides creates a perception of your congregation, and sometimes, even of Judaism itself.

Beyond Shalom: Your Synagogue's Guide to Connecting with Warmth and Welcome is a resource for office staff and volunteers that can be offered as a brief lunch-and-learn, a breakfast discussion, or a more intensive two or three hour training. The approach used in *Beyond Shalom* is one of empathy and understanding, with an emphasis on making sure staff have what they need to respond effectively and compassionately to a call or visit, and to know when to refer to clergy or senior staff.

Beyond Shalom was a joint project of the Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) and the National Association for Temple Administration (NATA), and is available for purchase through [Behrman House publishing](#). Let us know if you choose to purchase this publication. If there is enough interest, we may offer a specific program or training.

Sample Content to Support the Work of Office Staff and Volunteers:

1. Opening the Door: An introduction to the crucial role synagogue and school office staff can have in opening the door to Jewish community
 - Offering a warm first welcome
 - Answering the phone
 - Putting a caller on hold
 - The message your answering system sends
 - Accentuating the positive
 - The angry caller
2. An activity: “Knowing the Heart of the Stranger: How it Feels to Call a Synagogue”
 - Explore numerous feelings people have when calling a synagogue
 - Engage in practice case scenarios
3. Case scenarios and discussion questions; topics or those who might call include:
 - Prospective members
 - High Holy Days tickets
 - Religious school
 - *B'nai mitzvah*
 - Membership and dues
 - Lifecycle events for nonmembers
 - 20s & 30s/young adult/Millennials programming

- Empty nesters seeking community
 - Members who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer
 - Finances (non-dues fees someone might pay to a congregation)
 - Jewish education
 - Birth rituals
 - Conversion
 - Weddings
 - Death
 - Role of the person of another faith background in congregational life
4. Two brief text studies for *Pirkei Avot* - Ethics of our Fathers
- Text provided
 - Discussion questions
5. Appendix with additional resources; resources include:
- Suggested training outline (one-day session and lunch & learn)
 - Call referral chart
 - Intake interview for new members
 - Intake interview report memo
 - [Becoming a Jew: Questions about Conversion](#)
 - *Introduction to Sanctuary Etiquette*
 - *Intermarried? Reform Judaism Welcomes You*

Reaching Beyond Your Four Walls

Expanding your congregation's reach with programs held in public spaces

In addition to our congregations and Jewish institutions, current trends¹ show that many people, especially young adults in their 20s and 30s, are finding spiritual community, connection, and meaning in places you might never have considered—the gym or a fitness class, pop-up community meals, social service projects, peer-led learning and spiritual groups, and international travel, to name a few! This current wave of engaging in Jewish life does not (and, in fact, should not) be mutually exclusive of our already established Jewish institutional culture and practice. Offering programs and experiences outside of your congregation offers distinct opportunities to engage a more diverse and larger number of individuals and families who might otherwise have difficulty engaging in Jewish life.

“Public Space Judaism,” a term originally coined by Big Tent Judaism, is consistent with the understanding that expressing our Jewish values is not limited to what we do in a synagogue but also includes how we interact with the wider world. Rabbi Jessy Gross discusses a complementary approach in [her compelling Eli Talk](#). [Rabbi Gross](#) suggests reaching back to our roots and embracing a “mobile mishkan model.” For many, experiencing and expressing their Judaism in a synagogue or formal institution does not meet their needs, and becomes a barrier to finding community and developing a connection to Jewish life. So whether it’s Public Space Judaism, the mobile mishkan model, or something else, consider reaching beyond your four walls. Congregational activities held in public settings (e.g., a park, a coffee shop, a neighborhood fair) make the Jewish community more visible and accessible to a wider audience.

Cohorts that especially benefit from these important public space offerings are interfaith couples, families with young children, people in the 20s and 30s, and people who identify with groups that historically have been marginalized and not readily welcomed into congregations, such as Jews of Color; Jews who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender; or those with physical, emotional, neurodevelopmental, or neurocognitive disabilities. Creating more opportunities and avenues for engagement further places a value of welcoming people where they, who they are, and as they are.



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¹ For more information, visit [How We Gather](#)



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Six Ways to Make Your Public Events More Successful

In addition to being thoughtfully-planned and well-organized, the most successful programs held in public spaces consider the following:

1. **Planning with input from the cohort the program is intended to reach**

Remember this phrase: “Nothing about us without us.” Invite those you hope to reach and engage to plan the event. For example, if you’re hoping to engage with multiracial families, invite members of those families into the planning process. The same goes for people in other cohorts, like those in interfaith relationships, twentysomethings, or gender non-conforming teens.

2. **Publicity**

- Coordinate with your congregation’s social media manager (or consult your congregation’s social media/communications policies) to promote the event on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media channels
- Take out an ad in a local community newspaper
- Post flyers in schools, community centers, market areas, dog parks, etc.
- Add your event to neighborhood, township, or professional listservs
- Ask your friends and their friends to spread the word

3. **Relationship building and networking among those who attend**

- Have volunteers (greeters) proactively make connections among people in attendance
- Hand out fun, pre-made postcards, inviting people to learn more about one another (make it a game!)
- Provide a suggestion box, eliciting feedback for future events
- Hang poster boards or cover a table with butcher paper, provide markers and invite people to answer fun questions or draw pictures

4. **Accessibility**

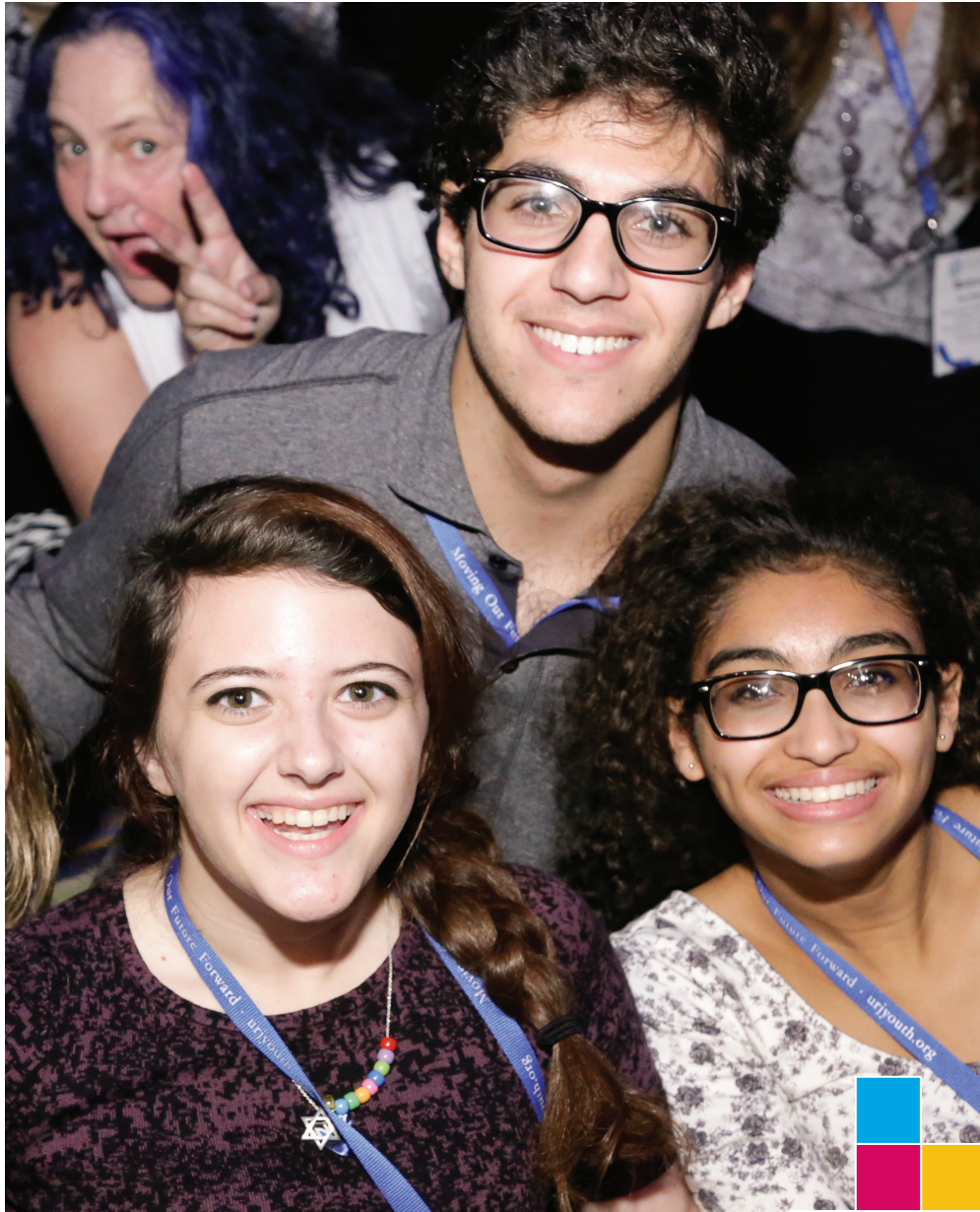
- Consider geography: availability of public transportation, publicity aimed at multiple neighborhoods, etc.
- Plan ways to accommodate attendees who don't or can't preregister
- Schedule "open house" hours that are convenient for people with various schedules
- Consider partnering with a local organization or business to off-set costs of food, drinks, supplies, etc., and to cast a wider reach to publicize
- Ensure your space is physically accessible, making sure ramps are available and walkways clear of obstacles
- Consider having a variety of seating and tables that can accommodate a range of physical needs, such as wheelchairs, walkers, or general mobility limitations
- Designate a space for people who might need a sensory break—such as a quiet corner away from loud music or games, or a shady area of a park

5. **Assumption of Jewish background, knowledge, or experience**

- Have flyers, handouts, poster boards, or blackboards that explain key terms/concepts that support the theme of what you are doing
- Don't distinguish between insiders and outsiders, members and non-members
- Show that all are welcome and treated as part of one large community
- Encourage people to bring a friend if they are concerned about not knowing anyone or feeling uncomfortable

6. **Opportunities for follow up**

- Collect contact information at the event by inviting people to register and be entered in a prize drawing
- Have a sign-up sheet so attendees can let you know they want information about upcoming programs
- Distribute postcards or flyers with key leaders' or members' contact information; these leaders or members should be those who are available for a follow-up conversation



OBSERVE

Strategies for observation and evaluation



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Observe: An Overview

The process of becoming a congregation that engages in the practice of Audacious Hospitality requires careful examination of previous “business as usual” practices.

To open our doors and create a more fully integrated and inclusive Jewish community—one which represents a full range of multiple and intersecting identities and needs—we must prepare ourselves to engage with Jews or those seeking Judaism whose race; ethnicity; sexual orientation; gender identity; income level, physical; mental, or developmental ability; and family makeup may not be familiar or part of our congregation’s self-image or (perceived) majority identity.

Historically, many of our congregations and communities have limited experience supporting those individuals and families who live on the margins of Jewish life. However, as contemporary demographics continue to shift and we heed the call to open our doors to those who have otherwise been turned away from Judaism, we are required to make the necessary preparations within ourselves and our congregations to do the sacred work of creating and cultivating Jewish community.

This section provides a number of resources to guide you in taking an honest inventory of how you and your congregation collectively work to create spaces of welcome and inclusion. Though we often have an urgency to jump right in and address the need for change, we must take the time to fully evaluate and assess our readiness to do the deeper work of Audacious Hospitality. Our physical environment, our online presence, the way in which we communicate a sense of belonging among one another, and how we identify our own internal and institutional prejudices combine to create a safe and sacred space in which to fully engage in creating a community and world of wholeness, justice, and compassion.

Observe: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious Hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעִסּוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Proverbs 16:16 “How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! And to gain understanding is preferable to silver!”

- What types of wisdom can we cultivate to become more aware of the needs of all the people in our community? In what forums can that learning happen?
- What resources and riches do we already have that we can apply to the work of being welcoming and inclusive?

Isaiah 3:10 “Say of the righteous, when they are good, that they shall eat the fruit of their works.”

- What methods can we use to assess how welcoming our community is?
- How will we know if we have been audaciously hospitable? What changes will we see in our community?

Deuteronomy 31:13 “Their children, too, who have not had the experience, shall hear and learn to revere the Eternal your God.”

- What do we know that we don't know? What tools can we use to figure out what we don't know that we don't know?
- How well are we doing at listening, as individuals and as a community? How well are we doing being willing to learn new norms and practices? How can we continue to cultivate listening and learning skills?
- How are the practices of being audaciously hospitable being taught to young people in our congregations?

Audacious Hospitality Congregational Self-Reflection

Overview

This assessment is a starting point for reflection, conversation, and action within your congregation. It is not an exhaustive list. In a growing number of categories, there is a corresponding resource in the Tent. This Audacious Hospitality Congregational Self-Assessment is intended to help your leadership team identify steps toward Audacious Hospitality (AH) over the next year and the years to follow. It allows you to both build on your existing measures and initiate new ones. Think of it as an idea checklist, a vision of more proactively inclusive congregations towards which we can collectively work.

Connecting with (New) Members		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Create a Personal Welcome	We have established a system so that all inquiries are followed up on with a warm, personal phone call or alternative contact.			
	We have a system whereby we offer to sit with new individuals/families at Shabbat or holiday services.			
Begin Gatherings with Conversation	All gatherings and meetings are intentionally viewed by leadership as opportunities to meaningfully connect congregants with one another.			
	We begin gatherings with a question for people to discuss in pairs. (Example: asking people to share hopes for the new year at Rosh Hashanah; giving them something to remember about one another so they can continue to discuss when they meet again during the year.)			
Connect Members	We have a mentoring or buddy program to help new members connect to another family/individual.			
	We suggest that families/individuals attend services and temple activities together.			
New Members for Three Years	We recognize that becoming a “member” of a congregation is a long process that involves building relationships, as well as attending services, programs, and enrolling children in religious school.			
	Accordingly, we actively build relationships with new members as though they are being “recruited” for three years or until they have made new friends and are meaningfully engaged within the congregation.			
Checking in	We have a process or system that ensures that each member receives a personal contact with a/the _____ of every _____.			
	We remember to follow up with congregants on a regular basis.			
Member Engagement Plan	We have a plan to strategically engage members. We’re taking into account the diversity of identity and family structure (singles, single-parent families, families without children, same sex couples, etc.)			

Interfaith Families		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Welcome	We welcome interfaith families on our website, in the temple bulletin, in electronic communications, and on social media.			
Programs	We teach our (interfaith) families how to celebrate Jewish holidays in their home.			
	Transliteration and translation are consistently provided with all printed prayers and blessings.			
	The stories of each holiday, along with a vocabulary list and suggestions for how to celebrate with children, are included in religious school materials.			
Opportunities to Make New Friends	We provide opportunities for interfaith couples and families to meet other families, such as parent education days or a special evening in the sukkah.			
Resources	ReformJudaism.org is recommended on our website, in our temple bulletin, and in electronic communications.			
	Our library has books for interfaith couples/family and those new to Judaism.			
Reach Out to Your Community	We offer open programs, such as Tot Shabbat, holiday learning sessions, Hanukah parties, and the Purim carnival to the community.			
	We share our congregation's events and programming news on social media and in local newspapers.			
	We offer "Taste of Judaism" and "Introduction to Judaism" classes or similar courses designed for newcomers or those seeking to learn more.			

Encouraging the Exploration of Judaism		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Communicate	Our website states, “We welcome individuals who are interested in exploring Judaism.”			
Reach Out to Your Community	We offer “Taste of Judaism” and “Introduction to Judaism” classes.			
	All of our classes that teach about Jewish holidays are open to the community.			
	Our “Tot Shabbat” services are open to the community.			
	We use social media to communicate our outreach efforts.			
Reach Out to Your Congregants	We share information about URJ Introduction to Judaism classes.			
	Individuals who have converted to Judaism are thoughtfully invited to share their stories, such as on a panel that highlights different Jewish journeys on Shavuot or Shabbat Shuvah.			
Create Conversations	Conversion students are offered the option of completing the process at a Shabbat service.			
	We offer a “Mazel Tov” in our temple bulletin to those who convert, if they choose to be acknowledged in this way.			
Make Resources Available	We make reference to ReformJudaism.org in our temple bulletin and electronic communications.			
	We download, photocopy, and display “Becoming A Jew” from The Tent.			
	Our temple library includes books on conversion, basic Judaism, and the celebration of Jewish holidays.			

LGBTQ Inclusion		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Reaching Out	We have reached out to LGBTQ organizations in our community.			
	We created, or are building, partnerships with these organizations.			
	Our website proudly represents LGBTQ inclusion.			
Celebrate	We celebrate Gay Pride month in June and acknowledge it in our publications and from the bimah/pulpit.			
	LGBTQ members are represented in our lay leadership and/or staff.			
	LGBTQ members are also visible within our community by sharing their stories in blogs and programs. We offer gender affirming life cycle events.			
Conversation	We have conversations with temple leaders, staff, and teachers about LGBTQ sensitivity and inclusion.			
Registration Forms	We ensure that all intake, temple membership, and school registration forms account for gender diversity and transgender members. For instance, we use “adult/parent” in place of gendered terms.			
Schools	We offer training workshops to early childhood educators and religious school teachers to create a more inclusive experience for children and families who identify as LGBTQ.			
	We have books and multimedia resources in the library that are inclusive of LGBTQ families and Jews.			

Embracing Racial and Ethnic Diversity		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Diverse Images and Languages	Pictures on our temple website (photographs) and in communal spaces (posters, books) reflect Jewish racial and ethnic diversity.			
Begin a Conversation	We have taken time to thoughtfully consider and explore aspects of racial diversity in our congregation and the Jewish community.			
	We have dedicated time and attention to discussions and training about racial and ethnic diversity, and racial justice with our board and leadership groups.			
Programming	Our congregation's programmatic calendar is reviewed with the appropriate lay and professional leaders to ensure that our offerings are representative of the diversity of the Jewish people.			
	Scholars, authors, creative artists and leaders from diverse racial and ethnic Jewish backgrounds are invited to offer programs at our congregation. We plan congregational programs that focus on the experiences of Jews of Color (an author night, film viewing, musical program, worship service, etc.).			
	We make known our interest in having Jews of Color included as partners in planning events.			
Learning & Discussing	We choose books and readings by authors who tell Jewish stories outside the white/Ashkenazi experience.			
	We participate in the "Embracing Racial Diversity" conversation in the Tent to share ideas, questions, and resources about embracing racial diversity in our synagogue.			
Tikkun Olam	We participate in community efforts to advance racial justice. We are participating in the Religious Action Center's 3-year racial justice campaign, "Reflect, Relate, Reform."			

Welcoming Jews With Disabilities		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Awareness & Training	We've had (or begun) discussions among temple leadership about the many issues involved in making our congregation welcoming to individuals with disabilities.			
	There is a system in place to ensure that staff and key lay leadership are made aware of congregants with special needs.			
	Ushers and/or designated individuals are prepared regarding appropriate ways to greet and meet the needs of individuals with special needs			
Accessibility	Our congregation has ramps so that people in wheelchairs can enter.			
	There are places for people in wheelchairs to participate in Shabbat and holiday services.			
	Seating is <i>reserved</i> for individuals with physical disabilities, and seating is arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs.			
	Accommodations are made to move the podium and microphone to floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when bimah/pulpit is not accessible.			
Hearing Assistance	Individuals who are hard of hearing are welcomed and encouraged to sit up front.			
	Our congregation provides hearing devices.			
Visual Aids	We provide the <i>Mishkan Tefilah</i> app that allows people to read prayers in large fonts or we offer large-print prayer books.			

Audacious Hospitality		Yes	No	Not Sure/ In Process
Understanding Audacious Hospitality	Our congregation has a clear understanding of what Audacious Hospitality (AH) is.			
	Our clergy and temple leaders have engaged in a discussion about incorporating AH as a practice within our congregational life.			
	We've taken time to develop a comprehensive list of all of our congregation's various constituencies (generational, diversity, lifestyle/ times of need).			
	We have begun to thoughtfully consider which of these constituencies is and is not fully included in our congregation's policies, programs, and culture.			
Website	Our website reflects the goals and priorities that we have set.			
	The website includes language and pictures that represent our goals for AH.			
Consistency	Our AH priorities have been communicated to all temple staff members including administrative and building staff, religious school teachers and staff, auxiliary groups' (such as Women of Reform Judaism [WRJ] and Men of Reform Judaism [MRJ]) leadership.			
Programs	Our temple programming reflects our AH priorities.			
	Our programming promotes engagement among congregants new and old.			
Resources	We have access to resources that support our AH goals.			
	URJ AH brochures and resource sheets are displayed, along with other inclusive marketing materials in our temple office and/or lobby.			
	The temple library has books about interfaith couples, becoming a Jew, and Jewish racial and gender diversity.			
Next Steps	We have set goals and chosen priorities for our congregation for and aligned with AH.			



Creating a Welcoming Physical Environment: A Building Assessment

Overview

Everything in the physical environment, from the design of your lobby to parking lot signage, sends powerful messages about your community's values and priorities. A thoughtfully designed space can foster meaningful conversation and opportunities for relationship building. Help guests feel

comfortable by anticipating their needs and help them feel competent by providing clear directions and information about communal practices.

Preparing for the Building Assessment

Identify a small group (such as clergy, lay leaders, professional staff, board members, members, and/or someone not at all familiar with your synagogue) to work together on this assessment. As a small group, reflect on experiences you've had visiting a new or unfamiliar space, e.g. a synagogue that is not your own, a house of worship from another faith tradition, a camp open house, or a back to school night.

1. What helped you feel comfortable?
2. What would have helped you feel even more comfortable?
3. In general, what helps people feel welcome and comfortable when they enter a new or unfamiliar space?

In pairs, visit each area of the synagogue space and make some notes about that space.

Each pair might try to consider the space from the perspectives of different visitors, e.g. a first time visitor, someone who does not have a Jewish background, a single parent attending with young children, an older adult, or member of a historically marginalized group such as a Jew of Color, or person who identifies as LGBTQ.

1. What aspects of this space are inviting?
2. What aspects of the space feel limiting or challenging in any way?
3. What questions, if any, does the space prompt for you?

Building Exterior		Yes	No	Notes
Parking Lot	Parking lot is well-lit.			
	There are appropriately spaced, reserved spots, clearly marked with the Handicap Access symbol close to accessible entrances.			
	There are designated guest or visitor spots.			
	If there is offsite parking, there are vans or shuttles to transport congregational members and guests to the main building.			
Exterior Entrances	There are clear signs directing people to the proper, well-lit entrance, with clearly marked pathways.			
	For doors that are locked, there are clear instructions as to how to gain access.			
	Main entrance, or clearly marked side entrance to building, accommodates a wheelchair.			
	Assistance is provided for all events when the door does not open easily.			
	There is a welcome sign posted that expresses that you are glad visitors have arrived.			
	Mezuzot (or a second mezuzah) are placed low so they are accessible by someone using a wheelchair.			
Lobby/ Interior Entrance	Upon entering the synagogue, there is a someone to greet and welcome visitors (designated greeters, a person at a desk in the lobby area, etc.)			
	There are clear signs directing guests and visitors where to check-in and how to get to their destination.			
	Seating is available for people to mingle before or after services/event.			
	There are beverages and/or snacks available to visitors.			
	There is a private and quiet location for parents to feed/nurse babies (that isn't the bathroom).			
	If Hebrew signage is used in the building (whether in Hebrew letters or transliteration), there are translations and explanations also posted.			
	Additional informational materials about your congregation and community (including upcoming events) are available.			
	Pastoral materials are easily available to contact clergy.			
Restrooms	There is an all-gender restroom available and is it labeled as such.			
	There are baby-changing tables available in all restrooms and/or restrooms accessible to all clearly labeled as having changing tables.			
	There are step stools for young children in every restroom.			

Building Exterior <i>continued</i>		Yes	No	Notes
Sanctuary/ Worship Space	There are signs that briefly explain ritual items like <i>kippot</i> and tallitot and their significance and communal expectations regarding their use.			
	There is written explanation of highlights of the sanctuary space and worship experience.			
	Seating is reserved for individuals with physical disabilities and seating is arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs.			
	Individuals who are hard of hearing are welcomed and encouraged to sit up front.			
	Tallitot and <i>kippot</i> are easily accessible to people with physical challenges.			
	Accommodations are made to move the podium and microphone to floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when the bimah is not accessible.			
	Copies of “ An Introduction to Reform Sanctuary Customs ” are provided.			
	A basket of quiet “fidget” toys and picture books, or a “busy bag” for young children is provided.			

A Welcoming Website Checklist

Creative ideas and best practice for your congregation's website

There's no such thing as a blind date anymore. Before their first in-person encounter, you can be sure that each potential partner has Googled the other and checked out their social media profiles. It's no different with people who are seeking a congregational relationship, whether for a single program or long-term commitment. People will check out your website before they meet you in person and your congregational website will be the first point of contact for many individuals and families.

Take a close look at your website, including all the pull-down menus and pages, to assess if your website conveys messages of welcome and an open tent. You might ask a member of a congregation in another community or your neighbor who is from another faith background to take a look at your site for you.

Here are some things to consider so that your online persona encourages an off-line meeting:

1. Up to date and accurate information:

- Is your contact information—phone number(s) and email address(es)—up to date?
- Is your “about us” page up to date? Does it reflect your congregation's current clergy, leadership, and staff?
- Is your calendar up to date? Does it include upcoming holidays, special events, volunteer opportunities, board meetings, and more?
- Do you use social media sites such as Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram to share and invite people to programs and events? Does your website include links to these channels?

2. Website navigation:

- Does your website load quickly?
- Do your menu pages allow for easy navigation?
- Is there some sort of, “New visitor? Start here!” navigation feature?
- Is your homepage clean, simple, and easy to navigate?
- Is there a call to action inviting people to contact you to learn more about your community?
- Are links easily accessible, such as direct links to email the executive director, school director, clergy, or office staff to schedule a conversation?
- Is your website easy to read with large enough and dark enough font?
- Is your website [ADA compliant](#)?

3. Website content that reflects a culture of inclusivity:

Welcome

- Does your website encourage, through words or pictures, an invitation to come visit and try out a Shabbat service, holiday service, or special program?
- Consider the mood and feelings you hope your website will evoke from those viewing it for the first time. Does your website evoke those feelings?
- Have you considered posting on your homepage a brief (maximum one minute) welcome video from clergy, staff, and/or members of the congregation?
- Do visitors understand that they are always welcome, even if they have not officially joined (i.e., they have not paid dues)? *Build the relationship before requiring a commitment.*

Mission, Vision, and Values

- Does your congregation have a tag line that reflects your values?
- Are your values and/or mission statement prominently displayed (or easy to find)?
- Are the core values of the congregation reflected in the website content?

Language

- Will individuals and families find themselves reflected in your language?
- Does the language make it easy for newcomers to imagine themselves as part of the community?
- If insider Jewish language is used (e.g. mitzvah, NFTY, *yahrzeit*), is it explained? Are there definitions? Transliterations?
- Is there a specific statement of inclusivity?

Note that general statements of welcome (“open to all,” “everyone welcome”) usually aren’t sufficient to make someone feel welcome. Consider something more specific, like: “Our community welcomes interfaith couples and families, individuals exploring Judaism, LGBTQ individuals and families, singles, couples, and people of all ages and backgrounds.”

- Do you have a “Membership” tab on your website?

Some people find “membership” to be an off-putting term as it suggests an insider-outsider distinction. If you have a Membership tab on your website, consider re-naming it, e.g. “About Our Community,” “Your Temple Family” or “Get to Know Us!”

Photos

- Are there photos of actual members (not stock photos) in your facilities or participating in synagogue programming (not just pictures of an empty sanctuary or lobby)?
- Do you have pictures of individuals and families having fun, learning about Judaism, celebrating Shabbat and Jewish holidays, and engaging in social justice activities?
- Do your images back up your inclusive language?
- Do your images reflect the full diversity of the Jewish community, including people of diverse ethnicities, people of all ages, families with varied configurations, and people with physical disabilities?
- Would LGBTQ individuals see themselves reflected in the pictures on your website?
- Do the pictures reflect singles of all ages?

New to Judaism, Interfaith, and Exploring Judaism

- If you weren't already familiar with Judaism, do you imagine your website would make you feel comfortable visiting and participating in your congregation?
- Would interfaith couples think of your congregations as a place they would be welcome, could find new friends, and could learn about Judaism?
- If you offer them, would individuals interested in exploring Judaism find opportunities to learn about Judaism at your synagogue, such as Taste of Judaism and Introduction to Judaism?

Inclusion

- Does your website reflect ways you welcome people with disabilities?
- Does your website include profiles of a diverse group of congregants?
- Would multi-racial families see your school as a place that their children would be welcome?

Invited Guest Assessment

One strategy to gain feedback on how your congregation is engaging in the work of Audacious Hospitality is to welcome an invited guest who serves as a “secret shopper.”

Invited guests are people from outside of your congregation (and perhaps outside of your extended community) who visit your synagogue with only one or two people’s knowledge. The guests then provide honest feedback and insight as to the strengths and challenges of your congregation in creating a culture of welcome and inclusion.



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Guidelines for the Invited Guest Assessment:

1. Coordinate with a leader of another congregation to invite people to be guests.
2. Explain to your guests that the people of the congregation want to be more welcoming and hospitable to seekers and those on the margins of Jewish life, but they first need to know in what ways they must change.
3. Give each guest a copy of one of the audit sheets on the next pages, and provide a self-addressed stamped envelope for them to return the audits or email the audit sheets.
4. Instruct them to fill out the audit at home, not during the services.
5. Ask the mystery guests to visit the synagogue sometime within the next month just as if they were regular visitors.
6. Consider giving a gift certificate in appreciation for mystery guests’ time. At a minimum, send thank-you notes and, of course, invite them back to the synagogue to check up on the progress the congregation is making.

Results of the Invited Guest Assessment:

1. In addition to receiving the written response of your guests, ask them to be available for a follow-up discussion at your next board or staff meeting.
2. Begin to build a short list of things you can do immediately to respond to the guest audit findings.
3. Set goals and priorities. Make assignments, or solicit volunteers, to address the longer-term findings of the audit. Consider a working group and/or committee.
4. Where possible, enlist the support of the entire congregation as a part of the Audacious Hospitality initiative and the welcoming community you want to develop among all your members.

Please note—many of the questions on the following page were designed in conjunction with our checklists.

Invited Guest Audit Checklist

Task	Yes	No
Exterior		
1. Was the synagogue easy to find?		
2. Was there visible signage from the road guiding you to the building?		
3. Was there ample parking?		
4. Were there reserved handicap spots?		
5. If there was offsite parking, was there van-service available?		
6. If you were visiting at night, was there appropriate lighting?		
7. Were the pathways to the entrance clear and free of obstruction?		
8. Was there a handicap accessible entrance?		
Entrance		
1. Were you greeted when you entered the synagogue (by a designated greeter or by a member of the congregation)?		
2. Did the greeting make you feel welcome? Did it give you sense of belonging?		
3. If there were bulletin boards or brochures, did they have images of people who looked like you?		
4. Is there a private area for parents to feed/nurse a baby (that is not a bathroom)?		
5. Is there additional informational and materials available about the congregation and community (including upcoming events)?		
6. If Hebrew signage is used in the building (whether in Hebrew letters or transliteration), are there translations and explanations also posted?		
7. Were members of the congregation friendly?		

Invited Guest Audit Checklist

Task	Yes	No
Restrooms		
1. Were there all-gender restrooms that were labeled as such?		
2. Were step stools for young children available in every restroom?		
3. Were baby-changing tables available in all restrooms? Was there proper signage?		
Sanctuary/Worship Space		
1. Were you provided with a written explanation of worship and sanctuary practices?		
2. Was seating reserved for individuals with physical disabilities? Was seating arranged to allow extra space for individuals using wheelchairs?		
3. Did you notice if individuals who are hard of hearing/deaf were welcomed, and encouraged to sit up front and/or provided with a hearing assistance device?		
4. Were tallitot and <i>kippot</i> easily accessible to people with physical challenges?		
5. Were accommodations made to move the podium and microphone to the floor level to be accessible for someone with physical challenges, when the bimah is not accessible?		
6. Was there a basket of quiet toys and picture books or a “busy bag” available for young children?		

Adapted from *Welcoming Ministry*, United Methodist Communications 2010.

Cheshbon Ha-Nefesh (Spiritual Accounting)— A Membership Engagement Survey

Many synagogues might benefit from learning more about the spiritual and relational needs of their members. When membership information is collected, it is usually demographic information. When asked about what being a member means, congregants and leaders alike will speak solely of money and time. Effectively evaluating and understanding the needs of our congregants requires a deeper look into what drives a member's desire to be a part of the community. The following survey assesses the spiritual needs of members on their Jewish journey, and how synagogue leaders can support them.

Consider offering this survey annually around the High Holy Days or any other time that feels significant for your community.

1. In what year did you first become a member of the synagogue?
2. How important to you are each of the following?
(1–Not at all important; 2–A little important; 3–Somewhat important; 4–Important; 5–Very important)
 Intellectual growth and challenge (studying and learning new things)
 Physical fitness (exercising, participating in sports)
 Spiritual growth (exploring spirituality, seeking religious experiences)
 Professional achievement (advancing in your career, developing your work)
 Jewish living (observing Jewish holidays, creating a Jewish home)
 Personal relationships (spending time with family and friends)
 Philanthropy (giving money or time to causes)
 Cultural experiences (attending performances, creating art, music, etc.)
 Jewish continuity (transmitting Judaism to the next generation)
 Social justice
3. For you, to what extent is Judaism:
(1–Not at all important; 2–A little important; 3–Somewhat important; 4–Important; 5–Very important)
 A moral and ethical code?
 A way to give meaning and purpose to life?
 A connection to your family tradition?
 An intellectual pursuit?
 A culture (foods you eat, jokes, language)?

4. How important are each of the following in attracting you to this synagogue?
(1–Not at all important; 2–A little important; 3–Somewhat important; 4–Important; 5–Very important)

- _____ Opportunities for adult learning
- _____ Friendships with other members
- _____ Quality Jewish education for my children
- _____ The synagogue professionals
- _____ The congregation's role in the community
- _____ Religious services
- _____ A place for High Holy Days
- _____ Opportunities for children to socialize with other Jewish children
- _____ A place for lifecycle events (bar/bat mitzvah, weddings, funerals)
- _____ Leadership opportunities in congregation
- _____ Opportunities for social action
- _____ Attending cultural and social events
- _____ Volunteer opportunities

5. In general, how do you feel about the extent to which Judaism fits into your life? _____
(1–Much less than I'd like; 2–Somewhat less than I'd like; 3–As much as I'd like; 4–Somewhat more than I'd like;. 5–Much more than I'd like)

6. I personally attend religious services: (check one)

- _____ Not at all
- _____ 2-3 times a year
- _____ 4-11 times a year
- _____ Once a month
- _____ Several times a month
- _____ Weekly
- _____ Daily

7. In the congregation, I have: (check all that apply)

- _____ Many friends
- _____ A few friends
- _____ No friends
- _____ Many acquaintances
- _____ A few acquaintances
- _____ No acquaintances

8. During the time of my membership in the synagogue, I have:
(1–Often; 2–Sometimes; 3–Never)

- _____ Attended adult education programs
- _____ Served on a committee
- _____ Invited someone to services or a program

- Recruited a new member
- Hosted another synagogue family in my home
- Volunteered for the school
- Helped make a *minyan*
- Participated in a social justice project

9. Since joining the synagogue, the level of Jewish living in my home has: (check one)

- Decreased a lot
- Decreased somewhat
- Remained about the same
- Increased somewhat
- Increased a lot

10. I have a personal relationship with the/a: (check all that apply)

- Rabbi (If more than one, which?) _____
- Cantor (If more than one, which?) _____
- Educator
- Executive director
- Teacher
- Program Director
- Membership Director
- Lay leader
- Office staff
- Other(s) _____

11. I would like the congregation to: (check all that apply)

- Connect me with more people
- Offer worship services that would be more attractive to me
- Provide adult study opportunities
- Link me to social justice projects
- Teach me how to visit the sick and comfort the mourner
- Train me to welcome new members
- Use my talents; which are _____
- Enable the clergy to get to know me and my family

Adapted with permission *Sacred Community*, rev. ed. (New York: Synagogue 2000, 2001). *Based on Project Soul, Sinai Temple, Los Angeles, California.*

New Member Questionnaire

There are many ways to get to know new members. Asking them to fill out or respond to a questionnaire is one way, and the following suggested questions can help you deepen your knowledge of new members' needs and interests. It will also give you some insight into new member engagement areas that are working well and those that could use attention.

Consider reviewing the questionnaire with the respondent in person. Provide the questionnaire in advance, and meet to discuss the answers.

New Member Interview Questions

1. What first drew you to the synagogue?
2. What was your first contact with the congregation?
3. What was it like? How did it make you feel?
4. Did you receive a membership kit? What was in it? How did it impress you? Did it influence your decision to join? What, if anything, would you change?
5. Once you indicated interest in joining the synagogue, what happened next?
6. How did you learn about the congregation—its history, its structure, and its religious practices?
7. How did you learn about the synagogue's activities?
8. Were you asked to participate in or volunteer for any synagogue activities? By whom?
9. Were you asked about your interest in spiritual growth? In study? In prayer and services? In social justice activities? By whom?
10. Were you welcomed in a special way during services? By whom?
11. Did anyone contact you during your first year of membership? Who contacted you, and what did they say or do?
12. How would you describe your first year in this congregation? What has your experience been like?
13. When did you feel you were a part of this congregation? If you don't, what do you identify as barriers?

Adapted with permission Sacred Community, rev.ed. (New York: Synagogue 2000, 2001).

A Friendly Congregation—A Self-Assessment

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Sometimes we aren't even aware of how we view people, either positively or negatively. This may create barriers to how welcoming and inviting we are as a congregation.

In other areas of the toolkit, we will delve more deeply into best practices of working through biases. For now, a quick assessment of who you feel most welcoming towards is a first step in the Audacious Hospitality process.

In the following list, put a check mark next to the descriptions of people you feel would receive a warm welcome at your congregation and put an X next to the descriptions of people you don't think would receive a warm welcome.

Take time to review your answers in pairs or a small group. Did you check something off that surprised you? If so, might you be able to understand why you checked it off? Are there next steps that need to be taken either for yourself or your congregation at-large to address any barriers to full inclusion? Did people in your group check similar answers? If yes, explore what might be communal barriers to inclusion.

- | | |
|--|--|
| _____ Female who is not fashionably dressed | _____ Sephardic family |
| _____ Latino/a | _____ Musician |
| _____ Articulate, well-educated person | _____ Person who is deaf |
| _____ Person with mental disability | _____ Teacher |
| _____ Male with earring in one ear | _____ Agnostic/atheist |
| _____ Someone especially talkative | _____ Single mother |
| _____ Lower-income male | _____ Political liberal |
| _____ Older female | _____ Teenager |
| _____ A smoker | _____ Immigrant |
| _____ Israeli | _____ Professor |
| _____ Person with cancer | _____ Person with bad breath |
| _____ Single male over 30 | _____ Older single male |
| _____ Single female over 30 | _____ Gay couple |
| _____ Asian | _____ Non-English speaking person |
| _____ Family on public assistance | _____ Person with unkempt hair |
| _____ Unemployed male | _____ Political conservative |
| _____ Person who is very quiet and meek | _____ Blended family |
| _____ Family with crying baby at worship service | _____ Transgender woman |
| _____ African-American | _____ Woman who dresses provocatively |
| _____ Unmarried pregnant teenager | _____ Person who sings operatically |
| _____ Divorced female | _____ Person with many visible tattoos |
| _____ Person in a wheelchair | _____ Nursing mother |
| _____ Persons with poor hygiene | _____ Gender non-conforming teenager |
| _____ Recovering alcoholic | _____ Family with two moms |
| _____ Obese female | _____ Camp director |
| _____ Single male under 30 | _____ Child with autism |
| _____ Interracial couple | _____ Teenager with facial piercings |
| _____ Person who sings poorly | _____ Interfaith couple |
| _____ Retired persons | _____ Person with a developmental disability |
| _____ Obese male | _____ Doctor |
| _____ Lower-income female | |

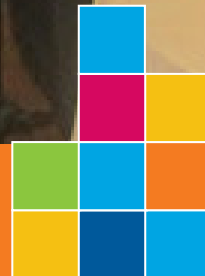
Adapted from *Welcoming Ministry*, United Methodist Communications 2010.



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LEARN

Deepening our practice of being in sacred relationship with one another





Learn: An Overview

Learning is vital to the practice of Audacious Hospitality and takes on two distinct forms—learning about ourselves through introspection and learning about others. The tools in the previous section (“Observe”) help to assess the ways in which you are already succeeding in being a welcoming community, and the ways in which you would like to grow. The next step is to deepen your understanding of the various identities and needs of your community, including veteran members, new members, and prospective members.

As you learn, you may encounter new terms, new language, new concepts, and new ways of thinking about yourself in relation to one another. In addition to gaining new skills and knowledge, the work of Audacious Hospitality may conjure up a host of feelings, thoughts, and realizations about yourself and those around you that are also new to you. That is part of the process! While this can be overwhelming at first, the goal is to take the time you need to process the new information. When broken down into small steps, the hard work is manageable, rewarding, and transformative.

The following resources offer a glimpse into just a few of the many ways we can deepen our knowledge of those who are a part of our congregations and communities, as well as those who are eagerly seeking to belong. Over the coming months, the Audacious Hospitality team will offer additional modules as a supplement to the toolkit that contain resources and exercises to address learning about specific cohorts and communities.

Learning how to be audaciously welcoming is, like learning Torah, a lifelong process that can provide continual insights and growth as you build strong, healthy, and robust communities. As we are in the early phases of development, we look forward to learning and growing with you!

Learn: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious Hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדַבְּרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Ecclesiastes 7:25 “So I turned about and applied my heart to know, to explore, and to search for wisdom and the reason for things.”

- What are you most curious about right now within the work of becoming an inclusive community (as individuals and as a group)?
- What obstacles may exist in your learning process? In your community's? How do we overcome these obstacles?
- The text says, “So I turned about.” What would it mean for us to “turn about”? How can we shift our focus to expand our understanding? What issues may have been outside our view?
- Why does the text say “applied my heart” rather than “applied my mind”? What would it mean for us to apply our hearts to this work?

Pirkei Avot 4:5 “One who learns in order to practice is enabled to learn and to teach, to observe and to practice.”

- How can our community learn more about those who have been marginalized? How can we apply this learning to create new and better community practices?
- Do we need support in observing or evaluating our community's approach to inclusivity? How could we engage that support?

Deuteronomy 4:9 “But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children.”

- What practices do we already have to assess our community's Audacious Hospitality efforts? How are we documenting this work?
- How are we teaching our children and teens to be welcoming and inclusive? What forms of self-reflection do we make available to them?

Jewish Identities and the Landscape of Jewish Learning in the 21st Century

Twenty-first century identities are complex. Whether based on age, citizenship, culture, ethnicity, gender, nationality, physical ability, physical appearance, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, or something else, our social identities have a great deal of meaning for us and the those around us.

—Aaron J. Hahn Tapper (*Judaisms*, 2)

What does it mean to be a Jew? In his book, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities*, Aaron J. Hahn Tapper seeks to answer that question.

In his own words, “As far back as the Hebrew community, and through their subsequent rebirth as Israelites, Judeans, and, eventually, Jews, this group has never been uniform or consistent. There has never been a Jewish people, only peoples. Within the Jewish tent there have always been subtribes, subidentities, and subfactions. And yet, even though the Jewish community has never been homogeneous or monolithic, Jews and non-Jews frequently speak about ‘the Jews,’ as if they are a single, cohesive, interconnected group” (*Judaisms*, 243).

Hahn Tapper’s thesis that there are Jewish peoples, not a singular Jewish people, is bolstered by his identification of three seismic changes in the Jewish community over the last 100 years:

1. 80% of the world’s Jews live in two countries, 40% in Israel and 40% in the United States, and yet, Jews are still present in 100-140 other countries;
2. Women’s roles of authority have shifted toward the center of Jewish life; and
3. Non-dominant Jewish identities* have started to be more accepted.

*Dominant Jewish identities remain:

- American– and Israel–centric;
- Male-centered;
- Heteronormative and cisnormative; and
- Ashkenazi–centric (or [Ashkenormative](#)).

Inattentional Blindness

The practice of Audacious Hospitality requires that we uncover our “inattentional blindness,” an idea that people have the “inability to see things that are directly in front of them (through no fault or visual impairment)” (*Judaisms*, 87-88). Psychologically speaking, this stems from a basic lack of attention.

Another way of saying this is that we live with a great deal of subconscious bias about what it means to be a Jew, despite the historical factuality of the multiplicity of Jewish identities. Left unchallenged, these biases often limit our potential to embrace, as global Jewish peoples, the fullness of our diversity, which would help to foster a deep and enduring sense of belonging for all Jews.

Activity

To think less about Jewish boundaries and more about Jewish possibilities, take a few moments to consider and write your answer to the following two questions, then discuss in pairs or in a group.

1. Whose Jewish story are we telling?
2. Whose Jewish story are we excluding?

*Sources: Aaron J. Hahn Tapper, *Judaisms: A Twenty-First-Century Introduction to Jews and Jewish Identities* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016); conversations with Hahn Tapper that took place between December 2016 and March 2017. *For more information about Judaisms, you may visit [Amazon](#) or [University of California Press](#). Guided activities and opportunities for discussion are also available.*

Implicit Bias: A Self-Assessment

According to the [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#), implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

The importance of understanding our implicit biases is that they have real world implications; they are pervasive and have an impact on our behavior among one another and in the world. If we are interested in and committed to dismantling the real oppressions people of color and those with marginalized identities experience, those of us in positions of power and privilege need to do hard and introspective work.

The following are two sources for online implicit bias testing:

1. [Project Implicit](#)—A collaboration in which researchers from Harvard University and other research institutions test a variety of implicit biases: race, sexuality, gender, disability, et al.
2. [The Intercultural Development Inventory](#)—An implicit bias test used for organizations to improve intercultural competence.

Read and Discuss:

Rabbi Sim Glaser of [Temple Israel in Minneapolis](#) took the Intercultural Development Inventory test and shared his findings in his [Yom Kippur sermon](#), “[Who I Want to Be](#),” with his congregation.

1. What were your first reactions upon reading Rabbi Glaser's Yom Kippur sermon?
2. What were a few insights you took away from Rabbi Glaser's teaching?
3. What are your thoughts about engaging in an implicit bias test for yourself?

Belonging: A Self-Reflection

Membership and belonging are two different concepts. People may seek membership to a congregation by paying dues in order to have access to certain goods or services, such as religious school, clergy for counseling or lifecycle events, or entrance to High Holy Days services. Too often, however, this model does not fully allow for opportunities for belonging. Belonging is a transformational model that is designed to build relationships within the community and create a place where people feel a sense of value, connection, meaning, and understanding. To have strong, vibrant, and robust communities, people need to feel as if they belong.

Take a few moments to reflect on the following questions.

Write down your answers and be prepared to share them in pairs or in a group. Discuss what you learned and if there are any insights you can apply to strengthen the feeling of belonging in your congregation or community.

1. To what communities do you belong?

2. Why do you think you belong?

3. How do you know you belong?

4. Have you ever felt like you didn't belong?

5. How did you know that you didn't belong?

Tips for Managing Challenging Thoughts and Feelings

The practice of Audacious Hospitality is hard work. It takes a great deal of courage, strength, and vulnerability to delve deeply into meaningful conversations. Sometimes, these conversations can be uncomfortable and challenging.

Whether you are talking about race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, etc., you will almost certainly come up against feelings that have not been fully explored and cause discomfort. Some feelings you may encounter as you practice Audacious Hospitality include guilt, shame, resentment, contempt, fear, anger, sadness, anxiety, embarrassment, hopelessness, defensiveness, and a sense of being overwhelmed, among others. These feelings might stem from biases and prejudices associated with racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, classism, and other “isms” you either never fully examined or even knew you had.

Though uncomfortable, walking toward discomfort and learning to lean into these feelings will result in incredible opportunities for immense growth for you, your community, and society at large.

A sample of skills needed to navigate challenging thoughts and feelings:

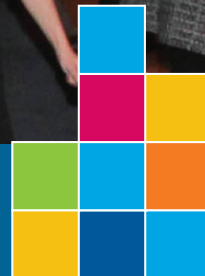
- **Self-awareness:** Pay attention to the discomfort that you are feeling. The work of Audacious Hospitality may feel more uncomfortable than comfortable at first. In fact, you are not going to get *comfortable* until you get *uncomfortable*. The ability to recognize your emotions and thoughts and reflect on how they influence your behavior is of the utmost importance, as is the ability to accurately assess your strengths and limitations. Keep track of your emotions, thoughts, and behavior, and you’ll grow in confidence and comfort as you navigate this work.
- **Emotion regulation:** Work on cultivating the ability to regulate your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors during times of stress and discomfort. Acting out of discomfort, stress, or anger does not allow room for productive conversation and space to build empathy, connection, and understanding.
- **Social awareness:** Making an effort to empathize with and learn about the perspective of others from diverse backgrounds and cultures helps to nurture social awareness. This may begin with simply recognizing that you need to learn more about social, cultural, emotional, or physical identities that are outside of your own. If you already have done some learning about people’s identities and/or experiences that are different from your own, go further. There is always room for more learning!
- **Relationship skills:** The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships across lines of difference includes skills in deep and empathic listening, skillful communication, cooperation, negotiating conflict constructively, resisting inappropriate social pressure, and seeking and offering help when needed. These skills take time to learn and practice. Identify local community programs or national organizations that can support your learning.

Navigating challenging thoughts and feelings require that we pay close attention to the development of the above-mentioned skills. Through the development of these skills and many more that we will cover in the toolkit and forthcoming training modules, we will be more adept at processing our discomfort and recognizing the impact our behavior may have on an individual, group, or community. The ability to make constructive and respectful choices as we process our own discomfort requires us to develop “multicultural agility,” the ability to navigate the unknown, be present in the discomfort, and build relationships while doing the hard but rewarding work of Audacious Hospitality.



HONOR

*Realizing our full potential with honor, respect, dignity,
in congregational and communal life*



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Honor: An Overview

Receiving honors in Jewish congregational life, such as opening the ark or being asked to say the blessing for a Torah reading, are ways we both welcome and respect guests, as well as engage and appreciate long-time members.

This practice of honoring members and guests is integral to our religious and congregational practices, including worship, outreach, member engagement, programming, committee meetings, administrative tasks, and clergy leadership. When we honor people in our community, we let them know that they belong, and we celebrate the important individual contributions they make that strengthen the whole.

As we become more intentional with our welcoming practices, we can work to ensure that the diversity of our community—reflected in our guests and long-time members—is acknowledged and honored. Ensuring everyone feels seen, heard, and appreciated in ways that are most meaningful to them at every point of contact is at the heart of our welcoming practices. One way of doing this work is through centering voices, bringing the typically marginalized or silenced voices to the forefront of our conversations. In this section of the toolkit, we will look at this practice as a means of creating a more balanced and inclusive community.

The Torah teaches us that we are all created “*b'tzelem Elohim*,” in the image of God. When we honor one another—sincerely and in meaningful ways—we elevate what is holy in each of us, and make people feel deeply welcomed. We hope this section of the toolkit supports you and your community as you build new practices that honor and celebrate the diversity of our Jewish community.

Honor: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Pirkei Avot 4:1 “Who is wise? One who learns from all. Who is honored? One who honors others.”

- a. How do we honor our members and their contributions? What groups feel appreciated most? Appreciated least? In what new ways can we express our appreciation?
- b. Whose voices in our community can we spend more time listening to and learning from?
- c. If every member felt fully honored, how might our community change?

Pirkei Avot 3:14 “He would also say: Beloved is humanity, for humans were created in the image [of God]; it is a sign of even greater love that it has been made known to them that they were created in the image, as it is says, for human beings were made in the image of God.” (*Genesis 9:6*).

- a. How do we balance the idea that we are an extremely diverse community with a belief that we are all made in God's image?
- b. What is the impact of using “He” to refer to God and “man” to refer to all humanity?
- c. How do you know you are beloved by a person or a community? How can we make others feel beloved?

Honoring and Centering Voices

The work of Audacious Hospitality is not a destination but an ongoing journey. Along the way, we strive to honor and center the voices of those who currently are or who historically have been marginalized in Jewish life. When we work on “centering voices,” we actively create space so that the voices and experiences of those who are often not seen, heard, or acknowledged in Jewish congregational and communal life move toward the center of the conversation, are visible, and have an influence on the decision making processes.

When we ensure everyone’s voice is heard and their personal narratives are told in their own words, congregations and communities move from institutions that are exclusive and maintains the dominant group’s power and privilege to fully inclusive, multicultural organizations, one in which members across diverse identities are full participants in decision making, planning, programming, rituals and worship, leadership, and community engagement.

Suggestions for Honoring and Centering Voices in Your Congregation and Community:

- Strive for a diverse congregational board, including board members with varied socio-economic backgrounds so not only those members who can afford to contribute financially as a board member are in positions of power and leadership.
- Invite students with diverse abilities, as well as their family members and experts, to inform religious school teachers about how to meet the diverse needs of those with disabilities and varying learning styles and abilities.
- Ensure your Outreach team includes members of typically marginalized cohorts, like people in interfaith relationships and Jews of Color.
- Ask those included in a specific cohort, such as young adults in interfaith relationships, to be involved in the planning and programming of events related to their needs.
- Encourage transgender teens to take on a leadership role in your temple’s youth group so they can help actively address what gender-inclusive spaces, language, and behaviors in youth group activities can be implemented. (The same goes for including transgender adults when implementing congregation-wide policies.)
- Offer programming that reaches out to LGBTQ Jews and their loved ones, and increase its effectiveness by including current LGBTQ congregational members in the planning process.
- Provide space for members of the congregation, prospective members, and guests to talk about feeling honored—valued, seen, and heard. Allow them to share how they feel connected, and to suggest what might add to or give them a sense of meaning and belonging.
- Reach beyond your congregation’s walls, and engage with your community at large. (Think: Mitzvah Day community events.) Seek out, inform your members of, and take part in local and national efforts of inclusion. Examples include but are certainly not limited to: addressing new immigrants’ needs for clothing or housewares; advocating for racial justice policies; and supporting single parents who do not have enough resources to provide their children with books or school supplies.
- Create opportunities for clergy, staff, lay leaders, and members to engage with Jews of Color in ongoing visioning in an effort to address structural racism and other forms of oppression.

Do you notice a common thread? In one way or another, the aforementioned suggestions adhere to the popular inclusion credo, “nothing about us without us.” This means that members across all identity groups are full participants in decision making processes, including and especially those that shape congregational inclusion practices.

The *KAVOD* Model

The Jewish value of *kavod*, translated as respect or honor, is a key element in the practice of Audacious Hospitality. Respecting and honoring people makes them feel valued, which is essential to ensuring an inclusive, robust community with deep relationships. So how do you practice *kavod*? By using the *KAVOD* model.

The *KAVOD* model serves as a road map to help you better navigate challenging situations and growth-promoting opportunities. This model can be used in a number of situations, including during staff meetings, when responding to difficult classroom issues in real-time, or when speaking directly to congregants. The *KAVOD* model is intended to honor people’s thoughts, feelings, and needs in the moment while also creating thoughtful opportunities for follow up and positive impact.

K—Keep calm, focused, and maintain an open mind. Or use your own “Keep _____” phrase that has personal meaning.

A—Acknowledge the situation by stating the facts or restating the question. “I am noticing that _____,” or “what I hear you asking is_____.”

V—Validate the perspective of the other person(s) involved in the situation with clarity and kindness. “I can see that you are _____,” or “I can hear that you may be _____.”

O—Offer a couple of possible short-term, in-the-moment solutions or courses of action.

D—Determine what next action steps are needed. What follow-up is necessary? Who else should be connected to this person or, at least, know about this conversation?



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DO

*“When the rubber meets the road.”
Developing strategies for implementation and difficult moments*



Do: An Overview

After assessing your Audacious Hospitality strengths and challenges, after learning about people with identities different from your own, after taking time to honor one another, it is time to take action. This does not necessarily mean you have all the tools you need or that the learning process has stopped. Rather, it means you have a foundation upon which you can build; you can begin learning through action.

The Torah tells us, “*na’aseh v’nishmah*,” “we will do and we will understand.” It is notable that the word “*nishmah*” is translated as either “listen” or “understand,” as the two go hand-in-hand. If we have the humility to listen, we become better positioned to understand. In the case of striving for Audacious Hospitality, it is important to listen to feedback as we begin to take action, so we can gain a deeper understanding of how to improve the work we are doing and increase our effectiveness. As we take action, we understand not every program we plan or policy change we make will work out perfectly, but when we listen, we gain valuable knowledge. We learn what works and what could work better; we learn how to apologize and readjust if we take a misstep; we learn to connect authentically and strengthen our community.

The resources in this section serve as a guide to provide support as you start to do. Whether you’re struggling to engage in the initial small talk of welcoming someone to Shabbat services or confused about how to apologize after making a mistake or saying the wrong thing, the materials in this part of the toolkit (and the modules that will follow) will help you face challenges and get back up on the proverbial horse.

The work of Audacious Hospitality may encourage you to review your “business as usual” practices as they relate to being welcoming, accessible, and inclusive. We must be willing to grow, acknowledge that we may miss the mark, and commit to continuing to challenge ourselves, even when it seems hard or uncomfortable—that’s part of the process of undertaking this work. You cannot be successful, though, unless you begin to take action, and these resources will help as you navigate your way through the bumps and obstacles on the road to a welcoming, deeply connected, and inclusive community.

Do: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
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Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Sotah 31a: “Greater is the one who acts out of love than the one who acts out of fear.”

- What do you love about this community? How can you make this available to others?
- What kinds of fears inhibit the work of audacious hospitality? How do we address and disrupt those fears, shift them into hopes?
- What resources and support do we have when this work becomes difficult?

Mishnah Sanhedrin 72: “When love is strong, we can lie on the edge of a sword”

- What are the “swords” we are facing in the work of inclusivity? What forms of love can be a solution?
- When have you “lain on the edge on a sword” in the past? What support did you have? When have you provided that support to others?
- What do we need as individuals and as a community to face the “swords,” the challenges we may face in outreach and inclusion?

Rabbi Tarfon: Do not be daunted by the enormity of the world’s grief. Do justly, now. Love mercy, now. Walk humbly, now. You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to abandon it.

- When have you become daunted by the work of inclusivity?
- What do you think is your part in this work? What skills do you bring to the table? What is most important to you in this moment?
- Is there a piece of the work that feels out of reach in our lifetimes? How do we sustain ourselves when the task seems overwhelming?

Tips on How to Have Hard Conversations



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As you work to implement change in your congregations and communities, you are inevitably going to encounter difficult conversations. In fact, it is quite likely that you encounter familiar scenarios that made affecting change challenging. Perhaps there is a lack of understanding around the need for inclusion practices from your board or the membership is having a difficult time changing the way services are offered. To learn how to transform your communities into fully welcoming spaces, you must be able to deeply listen to each other, and be open to having challenging conversations. It is significant that the central prayer in Judaism starts with the word *Shema*, listen, since it is through listening that we gain insight, deepen understanding, and connect to each other. These are some tips to support these hard conversations and enhance our ability to listen and communicate effectively.

1. **Be Mindful:** Recognizing that our own ideas and opinions are only a part of the story, and that other people may have access to pieces of the puzzle that we don't know about.
 - Each of our stories is grounded in our own life experiences, values and perspectives. Often there are many different but valid ways to understand an issue.
 - Seek to have a greater understanding rather than to be right. You don't necessarily need to agree with the person with whom you are speaking, but be mindful of their experience and point of view.
 - Be candid and honest while asserting opinions respectfully and treating the other person the way you would want to be treated. Using "I" statements here is helpful.
 - Focus on fully hearing what the other person is saying and accepting the discomfort of what they may be saying as part of the process rather than relating their story to one of your own.
2. **Ask:** Speaking the truth as we see it and asking questions about things we don't know or understand—particularly on topics related to identity, difference, power, and justice.
 - Be willing to make yourself vulnerable through asking difficult questions. If asked with the intention to genuinely grow in your learning, you cannot ask a "wrong" or "stupid" question.

- Think intentionally about whether a question may alienate the person you are speaking to. Sometimes, asking a question about a marginalized group to a member of that population can be alienating. Consider if there is someone closer to you who may have the answer to this question rather than someone you just recently met. If you need to ask the person you are speaking with and/or just met a sensitive question, stop and think: will the question put them on the spot, or is too personal to ask someone new or in a public space?
3. **Trust:** Building a safe environment to try out new ideas and work through the conflicts, controversy and “ouch moments” that often arise in talking about difficult topics is a must!
 - Consider whether agreements, like confidentiality or whether it is ok to bring up what is said in the conversation at a later date in other settings, are needed for this particular conversation or activity.
 - Focus on creating a caring and safe space that is able to hold principled disagreements.
 4. **Listen:** Deeply listening to what others say and to the feelings, experiences and wisdom of what they say.
 - Make sure you are giving your undivided attention.
 - Face the person speaking and be aware that your body language expresses that you are listening to what they are saying.
 - Do not begin composing a response in your head (or compose your grocery list) while they are talking.
 - Confirm that you are understanding them by paraphrasing what they are sharing as a question—“So what I am hearing you say is...”—and periodically summarizing what they are saying.
 - Unless you are being asked specifically for advice or to fix a problem, focusing on listening rather than fixing, providing advice, relating your own story, or solving a problem.
 - *Holding space* is an art and a skill. Sometimes, people just need you to hold space for them to be who they are.
 5. **Respect:** Trusting the integrity of others, believing they have the right to their own opinions (even when different from your own), and valuing them enough to risk sharing your own ideas.
 - Listen without judgment and with the intention to find common ground.
 - Try not to interrupt the other person. Let the speaker finish their thought and reserve judgment until you hear their complete thought.

This is a lot to take in and we don't expect you to get all of it right away! Choose one tip and try it on for size. Practice that one aspect of having a hard conversation in any area of your life until you feel more comfortable. In depth training on how to have hard conversations will be available in the coming months and in the forthcoming modules of the Audacious Hospitality Toolkit. Stay tuned!

Steps to Creating Inclusive Congregations and Communities

Creating inclusive congregations and communities takes practice! It is not always going to be easy and we are not always going to get it right. In fact, we will sometimes not even know what to say and how to say it and that is ok! We are all learning to be understanding and responsive to one another's needs. The following are ways to practice creating inclusive spaces.

- Interrupt unfair and unjust interactions, conversations, or actions when they happen
- Notice your own thoughts and feelings—biases, prejudices, and stereotypes—as they arise
- Compassionate response to thoughts and feelings—there is no “wrong” or “bad” thought
- Listen to what people say and respect how you made them feel (if hurt or offended)
- Use your power and privilege to create opportunities for learning and change
- Support conversations, programs, and initiatives that serve marginalized members
- Invite speakers whose lived experience you are trying to understand or subject matter experts on the topic
- Validate the experience of marginalized members by including their voices and needs in your community
- Empower members of marginalized communities to step into positions of leadership

In pairs or a small group—answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What might it mean to interrupt interactions, conversations, and actions when working towards inclusion?
2. In what ways can you notice your thoughts and feelings?
3. What are some compassionate responses to your thoughts and feelings? Why is this important?
4. In what ways do you do your best listening? How do you notice the feelings that arise in you as you listen?
5. What power and privilege do you hold that can help effect change?
6. What programs and/or initiatives are you familiar with in your community that support marginalized populations?
7. Are there topics which you and your community might be interested in inviting a speaker to explore?
8. How comfortable are you validating the needs of the marginalized members of your community?
9. What ways can you empower marginalized members of your community to be in positions of leadership?

Hineni: Being an Ally

The word *hineni*, translated as “here I am,” is used throughout the Torah as a response uttered when someone is called upon either by God, a proxy for God, or another person.

Hineni, for example, is used in response to a call from the Divine, as when in Genesis God calls Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Abraham, not knowing what is expected of him, replies to God, “*Hineni*.” This call and response between the divine and the people occurs a total of five times in the Torah.

In other places, *hineni* is used in seemingly more mundane or secular circumstances, such as when a child calls to a parent. In Genesis 22:7, Isaac calls to Abraham, who responds, “*Hineni*.” The child is in a precarious and vulnerable space, and calls to his father for closeness, safety, and comfort. In our everyday lives, we frequently call for our loved ones. Without knowing whether we want to show them affection, ask a question, or protect them from something, they respond, “Here I am.” It is in this context that we must become allies to those typically marginalized, and say to them, “*Hineni*.”

As you will see, being an ally requires trust, proximity, and vulnerability. When called upon, you might not know what you are being asked to do, but that’s okay! Your willingness to be entrusted with someone else’s safety, dignity, and rights is a sacred calling.

Who is an ally?

An ally is defined as any person who supports, empowers, or stands up for another person or group of people (particularly those who are oppressed and/or marginalized).

Anyone can be an ally, but you must first understand that being an ally is not about being front and center (unless asked to be). Rather, it is about being engaged in and responsive to what the individual or group of people needing your support, privilege, and resources ask of you.

Here are a few things you should know as an ally:

- You may be invited to act alongside or on behalf of an individual, and you may sometimes be called upon without warning or preparation. The work of being an ally means being prepared at all times to be present: to stand wherever you are asked to stand, to speak up when asked to speak up, or step back when asked to step back.
- Your role is to listen and learn.
- It is important to know that this work is not about you, but you are offering the use of yourself to create a better, safer, and more just world for those around you.



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There are many articles about being an ally. They include guidelines, hints, and tips. Many are geared toward straight white people (the cohort commonly recognized as having the greatest privilege). Here are a few helpful ones:

- [Guidelines for Being Strong White Allies](#), by Paul Kivel
- [Community Toolbox](#), resources from the University of Kansas about how to be an ally.
- [5 Tips for Being a Proactive Ally](#), article and video by Everyday Feminism.

Additional Resource:

[Verna Myers](#), diversity advocate, outlines the deep relational process of becoming an ally in her powerful [TED Talk](#):

“Biases are the stories we make up about people before we know who they actually are. But how are we going to know who they are if we have been told to avoid and be afraid of them?”

Vera Myers suggests:

- 1. Walk toward your discomfort.**
- 2. Do an inventory. How many authentic relationships do you have with people of major difference?**
- 3. Expand your social and professional circle - notice who is missing.**
- 4. Go deeper, closer, and further, and build relationships that cause you to see the whole person, not the stereotype.**
- 5. Know this is not about perfection; it is about connection.**
- 6. You are going to get uncomfortable before you get comfortable.**
- 7. When we see something, we need to say something. Call out bias.**

As Myers says, the empathy and compassion that comes out of having relationships with people who are different than you is a signal of a profound change: “[You] start to realize that they are you, that they are a part of you, that they are in your family, and then we cease to be bystanders. We become actors. We become advocates. We become allies.”

How to Apologize When You are “Called Out/Called In”

When we do the sometimes difficult work of getting to know people who are different from us, we can make mistakes. This doesn't mean we're bad; it means we all have a lot to learn. Just like when we have food stuck in our teeth, we want someone to tell us.

But when we do make mistakes or discover how we've been playing into, hurting or marginalizing others it is useful to know how to acknowledge it and take responsibility for the impact we have had. Here's a [video](#) created by the writer Franchesha “Chescaleigh” Ramsey that can help show us how to apologize or respond to being “called out” or “called in.” The tips on this page are compiled from her work.

How to apologize so you show that you are committed to change:

The following are terms used to explain how people hold others accountable for using oppressive language and ideas or acting out oppressive behavior.

Called out: when someone points out in a manner that you may feel challenged by that you did or said something that upholds the oppression of a marginalized group of people and perpetuates negative stereotypes or ideas that have consequences to these groups of people.

Called in: when someone points out in a manner that feels less challenging that you did or said something that upholds the oppression of a marginalized group of people and perpetuates negative stereotypes or ideas that have consequences to these groups of people

When someone is called out or called in, the natural response is to get defensive: “Don't be so sensitive.” “My best friend is Black.” “Why does everyone have to be so PC nowadays?” This is understandable because no one wants to be the bad guy, but this route is not an apology. Defensiveness will distance you from the other person, prevent further understanding and inhibit future connection.

Instead, here are some tips for a good apology.

1. **Listen:** If there person is willing to share, allow them to explain to you what you did wrong and how you can change it.
2. **Understand the difference between intent and impact:** While it is better if someone did not intentionally seek out to hurt someone else, if the impact is that harm has been done, an apology should focus on the impact rather than the intention. (If I step on your foot and break your toe, the fact that I didn't intend to do so is not an excuse. An apology focused on the impact is necessary and meaningful.)
3. **Good apology vs. bad apology:**
 - a. A bad apology: does not take responsibility for the impact of the action, and places it on the other person. “I am sorry if/that you were offended.” This expresses that it is the other person's fault that they were offended, not that the person apologizing recognizes that they did something to harm and offend others.
 - b. A good apology: First, take responsibility for what you have done. Second, make a commitment to change the behavior. Third, say thank you. “Thanks for bringing this to my attention.” If someone has taken the time to point out that you said something hurtful, they are still invested in a connection with you and want that connection to improve. Thank them for speaking up and continuing to invest in your relationship.



LEAD

Next Steps in leadership and tikkun olam (repairing the world)



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Lead: An Overview

Throughout this toolkit, there have been challenging questions, as well as opportunities for reflection and engagement. As a result of this process, we hope that your understanding of the people who seek to be recognized as part of your community has deepened and that ideas for engaging them have been illuminated. Taking on the responsibility of Audacious Hospitality can seem like a daunting task, like the work might never be finished. But as you see your community open up and strive to provide interactions, educational offerings, and programming that meet the needs of your diverse community, be reminded of the famous *Pirkei Avot* teaching: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work of perfecting the world, but you are not free to desist from it either.” Such perseverance takes leadership.

The responsibility of leading rarely falls on “leadership experts” alone. In Judaism and elsewhere, we see leaders and leadership best principles and strategies emerge from everyday people and communities willing to do the work. Moses, for example, was a reluctant leader. He learned to rely on the guidance of others, including his non-Jewish father-in-law Yitro, to strengthen the Jewish people. This toolkit directs us to center the needs, stories, and skills of those on the margins as a way of strengthening our Jewish community.

This final chapter will ask you to consider how you can be a leader on the path to a more whole, just, and compassionate world. What questions might you consider as a community? How might you effectively share your learning with others? What action may arise from the hard work of visioning that you’ve been doing as you have completed the activities in this toolkit?

Each individual interaction between members, staff, participants, guests, and leaders in our community is an opportunity to express our highest values and holy connections to one another. From the most mundane tasks of creating registration forms to our holiest of sacred rituals, we have opportunities to engage in Audacious Hospitality. This section of the toolkit provides inspiration and tools to support your continued leadership in this work. Through your efforts, you can set a high standard of practice that always considers the full spectrum of needs of your diverse community.

Lead: A Text Study

Take time as a group or in pairs to set the intention for engaging in the work of Audacious hospitality.

Blessing for Torah Study

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ
בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה.

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu melech haolam, asher kid'shanu bemitzvotav vetzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah.

We, praise You, Eternal God, Sovereign of the universe, who calls us to holiness through mitzvot, commanding us to engage in the study of Torah.

Berachot 6a. “In the place where there is no leader, strive to become one.”

- How do we lead in a way that leaves no one behind?
- What types of leadership do you feel comfortable with? What is your greatest growing edge or challenge as a leader?
- What support would you need to better address the needs of marginalized people in your community as a leader?
- Whose leadership can you support in the community who can help address the needs of those who may feel currently alienated from Jewish spaces ?

Chovot Halevavot. “If a person strives...to do what is in their power, God will aid them to accomplish what is beyond their power.”

- How does the “imposter syndrome,” or feeling like we don’t know enough, inhibit our work on audacious hospitality?
- The work of audacious hospitality requires innovation and experimentation, what risks are you willing to take to create a more welcoming community?

Pirkei Avot 1:14. “Hillel says, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, who am I? If not now, when?”

- What motivates us to do the work of audacious hospitality?
- What would be different about your community if you achieved the inclusive community you envision?

Beyond the Checkbox: Audacious Hospitality Leadership Skills At-A-Glance

Throughout the toolkit, we have offered resources guiding you to assess and evaluate “business as usual” practices. As you deepen your practice of Audacious Hospitality, we encourage you to move beyond the checklists as you develop your skills as a leader. There is no one way to practice Audacious Hospitality, but the following skills offer you a starting point to further develop your voice and vision in your leadership.

The following are skills that leaders who embrace a practice of Audacious Hospitality might want to consider:

Put relationship before task

- Our relationships with those affected by the practices of Audacious Hospitality must take priority over completing a specific task. Do not allow frustration about the progress on a specific task to supersede the relationships developing through the attempts to complete the process.

Value proximity

- Be intentional about being close to those you are leading - hearing their stories and listening deeply to their needs. In a proximate relationship, you build deeper empathy and understanding of another.

Manage time

- Slow down. Create opportunities for space to do the work of the toolkit. It is imperative to observe and learn, and for changes to have the time to sink in and integrate fully. Allowing for an adequate and realistic amount of time for the work to be done helps ensure that it will have a lasting impact.

Courage

- Be willing to push the limits of what is known and familiar to you and your congregation. When you work courageously, you will be able to engage in deep and meaningful conversations, have breakthroughs, and enact meaningful transformation.

Innovate through experimentation

- Don't get caught up in the “but we have always done it this way” mentality. This will not allow for the challenges that have also always existed to be resolved. Accept that innovation and experimentation may feel uncomfortable and unfamiliar, and that it is also amazing how quickly a new normal can become “the way we have always done it.”

Fail forward

- Building a new vision for your congregation requires not being afraid to fail. The risks you will need to take to succeed also involve a potential to fail. Failure can build resilience, flexibility, and nimbleness to move on to the next iteration, which might be your congregation's next big success!

Be okay not knowing

- It is always acceptable if the honest answer to a question is, “I do not know and I will either think about it or research it and get back to you.” Leadership is demonstrated through being willing to be responsive, but does not require always having the answer in that very moment. Get back to people later with an answer, take the time you need to ponder the questions and utilize your resources. Do not feel pushed in the moment to provide answers you may not have.

Be vulnerable

- Be willing to be vulnerable and share your own stories, hopes, struggles and fears. Know when there is space as a leader to share in ways that facilitate more openness and vulnerability in the group. Demonstrate that we do not need to be perfect to participate in the process, allowing others to see your process, foibles, concerns, and learning.

Leave behind a “get-it”/“don’t get it” mentality

- This is not a contest. A fixed sense of “getting it” does not leave room for learning and growing. It is in this vulnerability where we are open to share our questions and stories. If we operate in the binary of “get-it”/“don’t get it” we risk fear of judgment and missed opportunities for learning.

Engage across lines of difference

- Consider whose voices and understanding you do not have consistent access to. Seek out the voices of those who you have not heard, spend time listening deeply and being willing to integrate what you learn, and question your assumptions. Challenge yourself to build relationships with those within and outside the community who can help you develop better, more interesting questions than you would have before engaging with them.

Both/and framework

- Steer clear of polarizing, either/or ways of thinking. Consider integrating multiple perspectives together in a both/and approach. Allow for the possible messiness of attempting to integrate everyone’s input into a collective solution rather than choosing one single option over another.

Support healing

- People in the Jewish community may enter your congregation having experienced a negative experience in a prior congregation or community. Develop strategies and provide resources to support community members who are recovering from previous trauma.

Courageous Conversations for Audacious Hospitality Leadership

Conversations about race can make people feel uncomfortable. Even those with the best intentions can, for example, unintentionally ask or say something that is rude or hurtful. Rather than risk hurt feelings by stumbling or stammering through a conversation or two, the typical decision is to not have the conversation. But that just doesn't cut it when doing the work of Audacious Hospitality.

Courageous Conversations about Race, written by Glenn E. Singleton and Curtis Linton, provides a framework through which we can enter into these kinds of conversations. “Courageous conversations” serve to counter the norms typically in place when talking about race and help us move from caring to action. Here are the four agreements they lay out to engaging in courageous conversations.

The Four Agreements of Courageous Conversations

1. **Stay engaged:** Staying engaged means “remaining morally, emotionally, intellectually, and socially involved in the dialogue”.

The norm for conversations about race in North America is to disengage, to act as if it is more polite or appropriate to not talk about it. To overcome this, we have to make an agreement to stay engaged.

2. **Experience discomfort:** Discomfort is inevitable, especially when in dialogue about race. This agreement challenges participants to make a commitment to bringing issues into the open.

Sometimes people are treated as if raising concerns or starting conversations about race is a form of starting trouble. Rest assured, you're not being a rabble rouser by engaging in a thoughtful conversation about race. That does not mean, however, that the conversations should or will not cause discomfort. Talking about race will no doubt bring problems and feelings of discomfort to the surface, which allows them to be examined and addressed. This is a good thing. In order to engage in productive conversations, all parties must speak frankly and learn to be comfortable being uncomfortable.

3. **Speak your truth:** This means being open about your thoughts and feelings, and not just saying what you think others want to hear.

Many times, people of Color are told that their experiences are not valid or real, or that they are exaggerating. This dismisses their feelings, and prematurely ends the conversation. On the other hand, sometimes the conversation never begins because white people are afraid to engage; they are scared they will say the wrong thing or become defensive. White people can be worried that by responding authentically, they'll invalidate someone's feelings. In order to achieve a breakthrough in communication there must be space for people to speak candidly about their experiences, thoughts, and questions.

4. **Expect and accept nonclosure:** This agreement asks participants to “hang out in uncertainty” and not rush to quick solutions, especially in relation to racial understanding, which requires ongoing dialogue.

When we start learning what we do not know we do not know, there is a rush of new questions, information, thoughts, and feelings. There is also a desire to find closure and feel as if we have solved the problem so that we do not remain uncomfortable and can move on. This is not a productive or realistic expectation. It is important to accept that even after a courageous conversation there will be more questions, information, thoughts, and feelings, and more learning to do. While a single conversation will not solve the problem, each conversation moves us closer to great understanding, engagement, and inclusion.

Shared Agreements

Shared agreements are a *brit*, a contract, that are used to create a sense of safety and understanding among participants in a group in order to allow transformation to occur. Shared agreements can be used either during a learning session, a committee meeting, a staff retreat, or anytime that people gather to have a discussion in which challenging material may be evoked. Shared agreements can become a normative part of your community's culture. Keep these shared agreements posted in your office or place of gathering for learning. Have copies of the shared agreements available to hand out or use in a PowerPoint at the start of all your meetings.

The following are some examples of shared agreements:

1. Assume positive intent, while acknowledging that intent is different than impact.
2. Acknowledge that people come from different experiences and cultural frameworks as they enter into this work together. Remember to be mindful of this reality.
3. Pass/Participate: You are welcome to participate. You may choose to pass, though we encourage people to challenge themselves to participate in the conversation.
4. Step Up/Step Back: Be aware of how much you as an individual are participating. If you are someone who generally speaks a lot, consider stepping back to give space for others to speak. If you generally participate less, consider stepping up and sharing with the group.
5. Use "I statements" and speak from personal experience.
6. Confidentiality: What is said here stays here. If appropriate, you may also want to agree to not discuss matters that arise here even with members of this group when outside of this meeting space.
7. Law of Unfinished Business: We will accomplish a lot, but not everything we may want to get done. Let's manage expectations for any one event, and appreciate that we may leave with questions or unfinished business, but will be further along than when we started.

There are many other possibilities of agreements to add to this list. It is best to elicit suggestions from the entire group, and also confirm that all participants agree to, understand, and feel comfortable with all of agreements on your list.



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