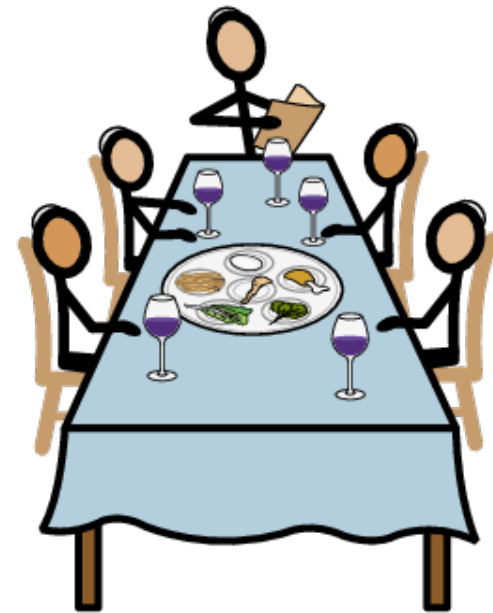


Including all four children at the seder

Rabbi Ruti Regan

Rabbinic Disability Scholar in Residence

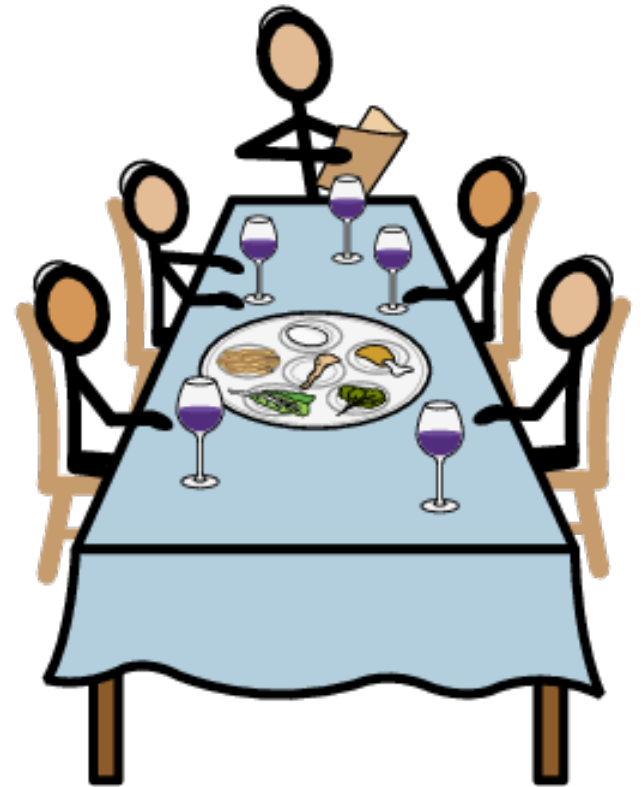
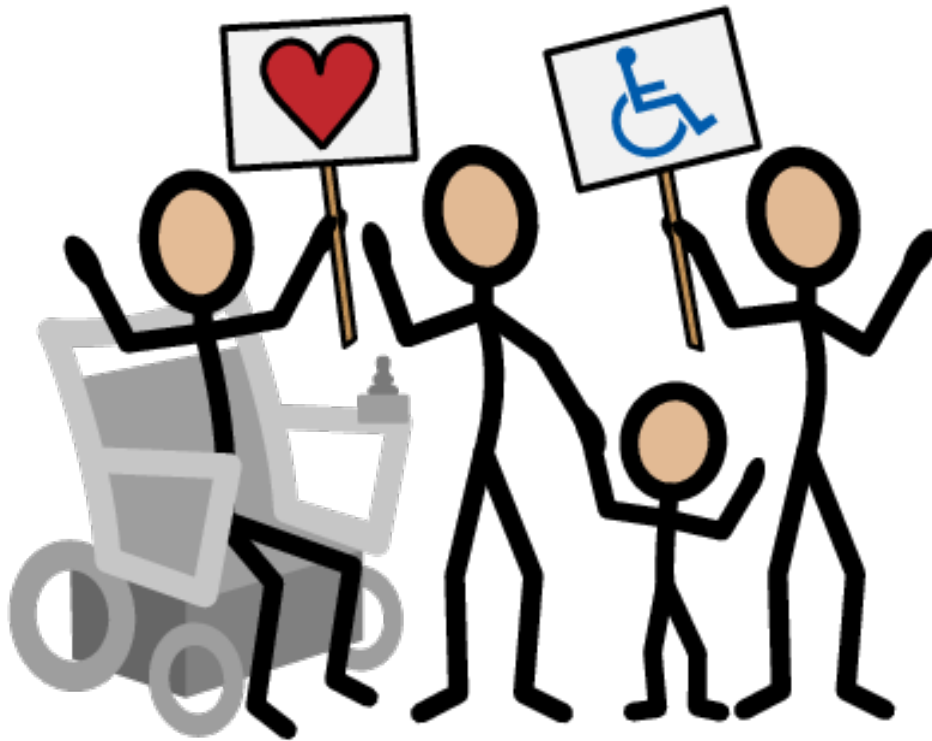


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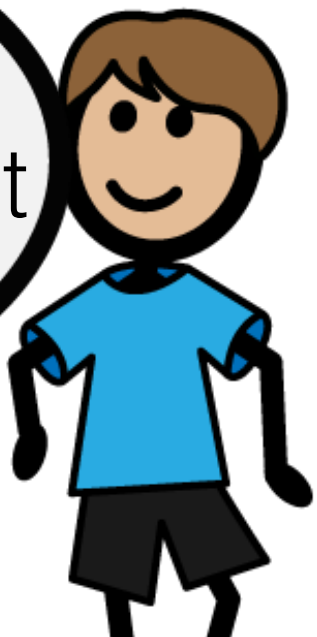
Passover food and the importance of disability acceptance.



A child's question to a visiting rabbi



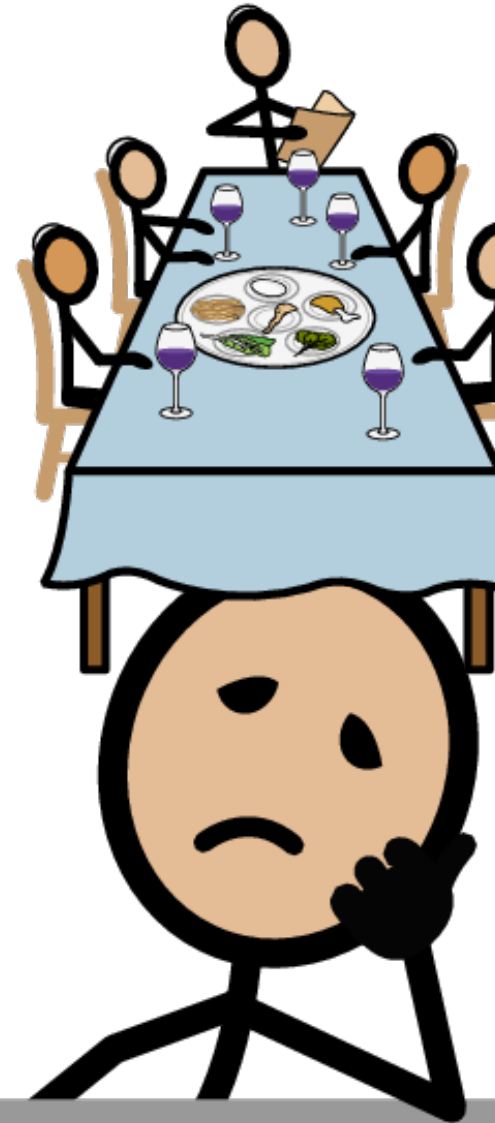
The Talmud and other Jewish texts say that the reason we do weird things at the seder is so that children will stay interested and ask questions.



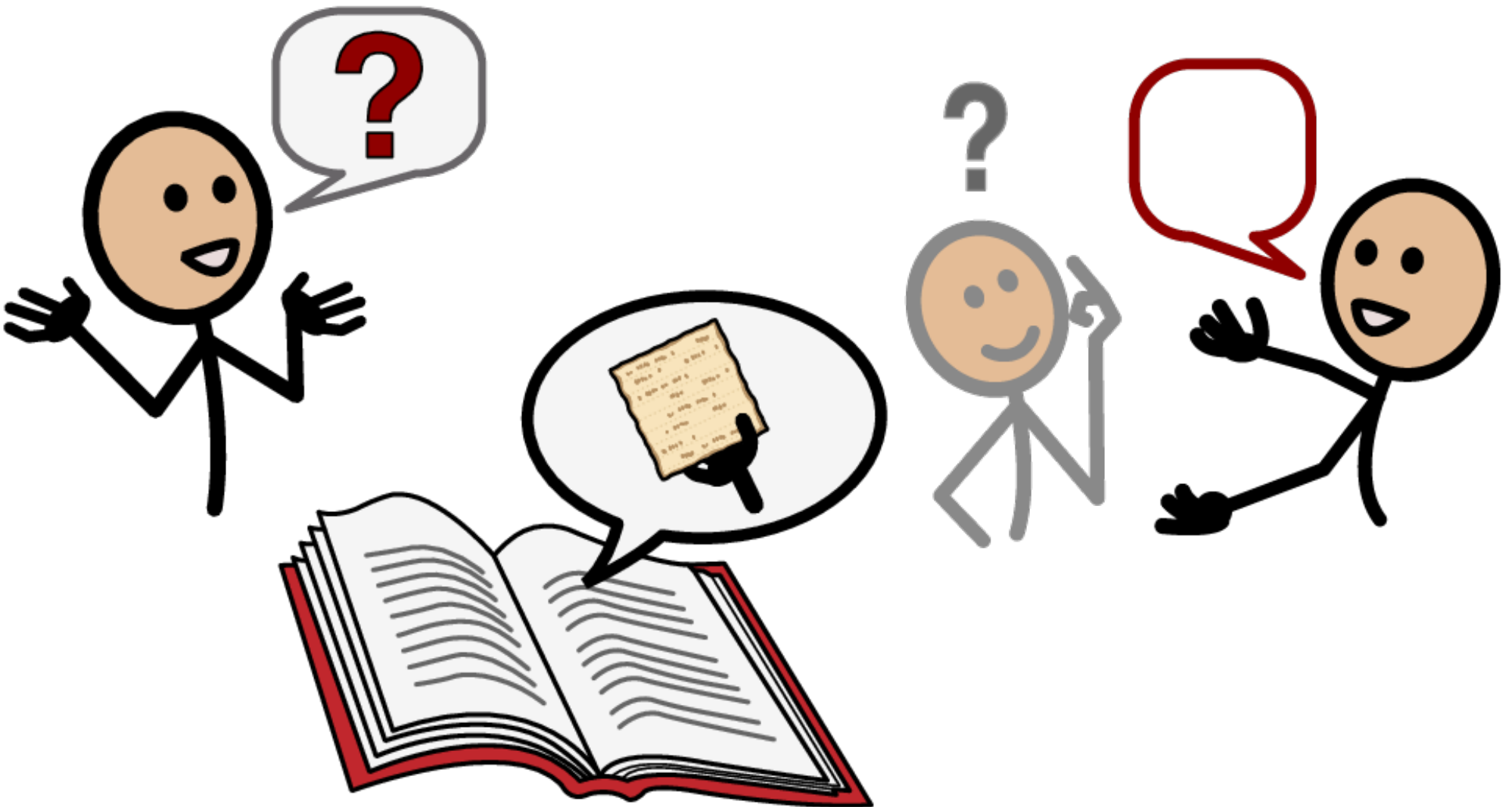
If that's the reason, it's not working!

Why can it be hard to make seders interesting?

- One reason: The Haggadah was written by and for super nerdy rabbis who didn't know very much about teaching.
- The seder has a lot of really great content — and doesn't always have great methods of helping everyone to access it.
- The seder itself says that we're supposed to do this!

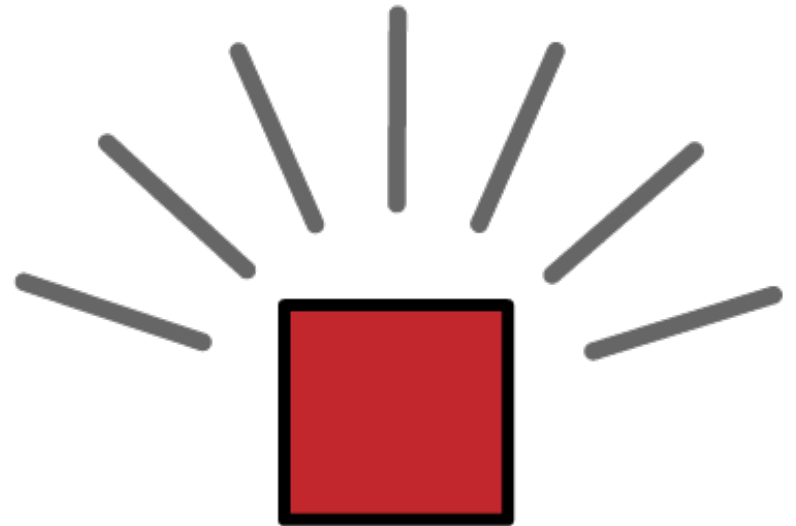


Building an interesting conversation for everyone



The secret ingredient is acceptance

- Of the people we're with.
- Of the context we're in.
- Of the limitations and possibilities we're facing.

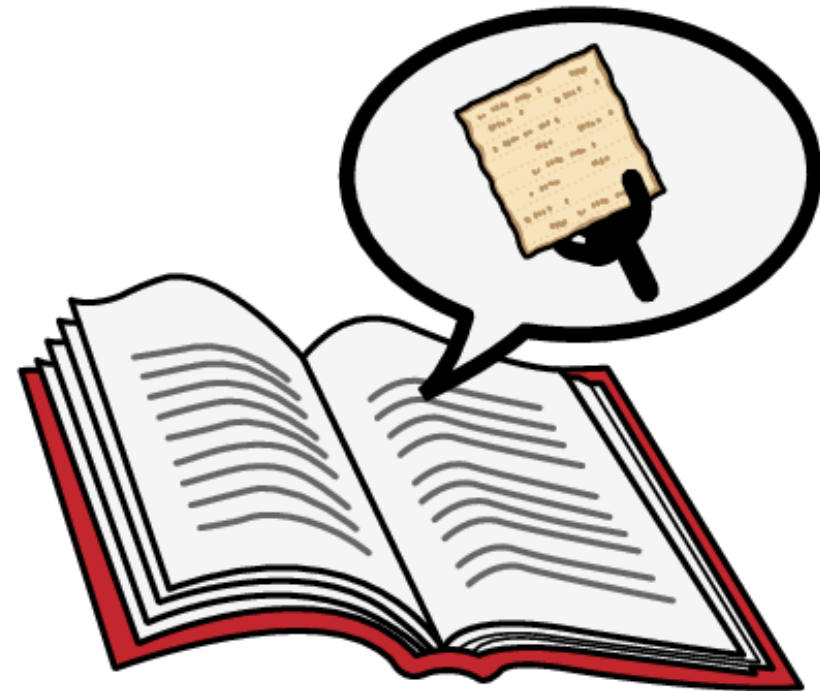


Show, don't tell

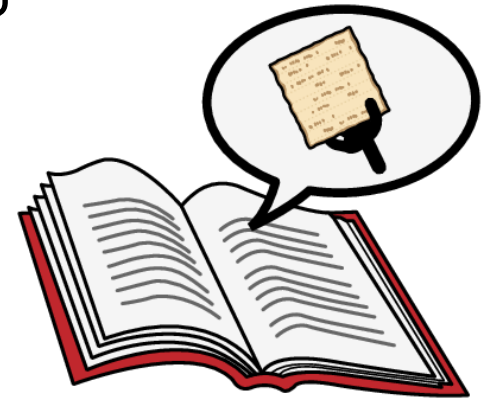
- If it feels meaningless to people, telling them that it's important won't change that.
- If people are bored, telling them that the story is interesting won't make them interested.
- When we lead seders, we need to *show* participants that we're doing something meaningful.
- Sincerity matters.

Beyond “making it fun”

- Fun is good — and seders can do more than that.
- The liturgy has depth.
- Asking good questions.
- Having good conversations.
- Telling and learning our story.



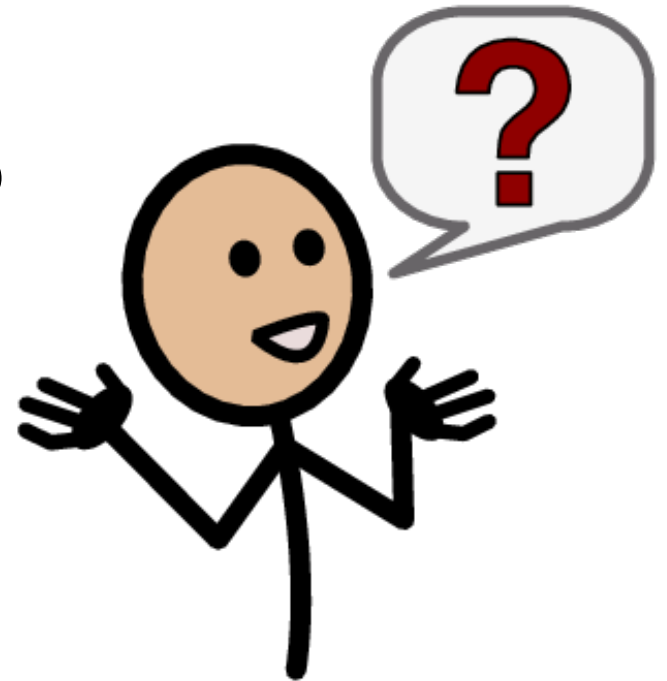
Beyond “making it meaningful”



- The Jewish story is interesting.
- The seder is already meaningful — the point is to give people access to the meaning.
- We don't need to trick people into being interested — we need to show them that it is interesting.

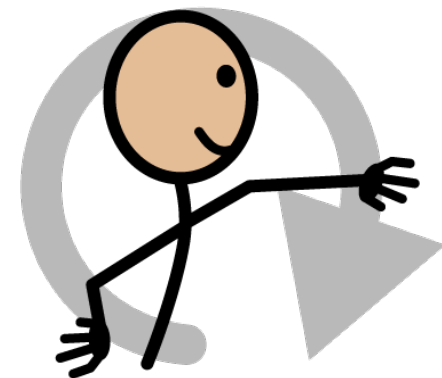
Being interesting starts from being interested

- Go through the haggadah before Passover.
- Find parts that seem interesting to you.
- Find parts that you think will be interesting to others.
- Focus on those parts.



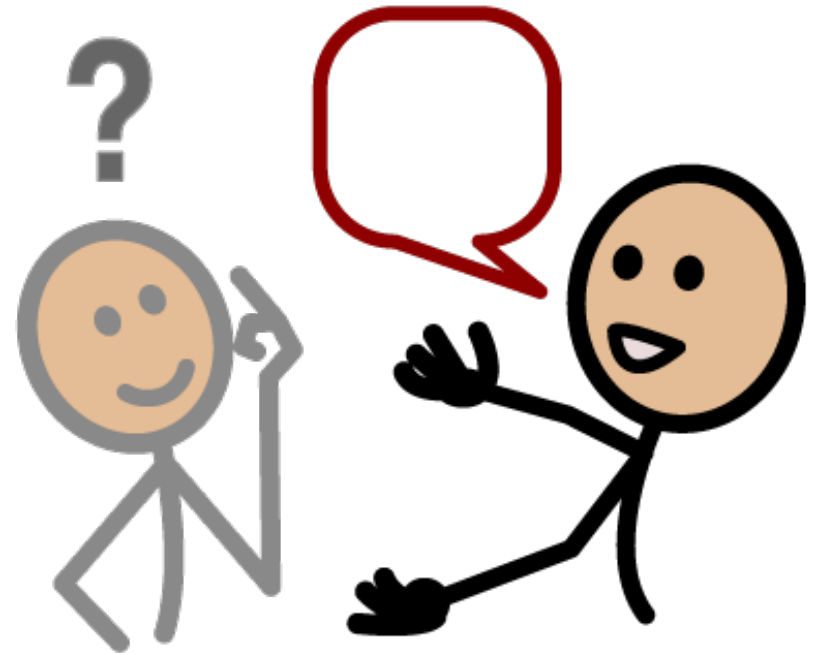
Learning from experience

- The great thing about Passover is that it happens every year, and we can keep getting better at it!
- Think about what you've tried (or seen done) in the past. What's worked? What hasn't?
- Which things would you like to try again? What would you rather not do?
- Are there new things you would like to try?



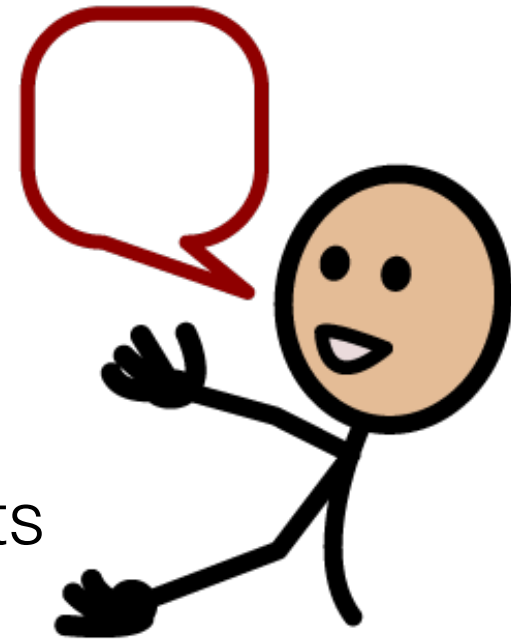
Learning from other participants

- What questions do *you* have about the seder?
- What questions might participants be able to help you answer?
- What do people in the room know?
- What expertise and insight might they be able to bring to the conversation?



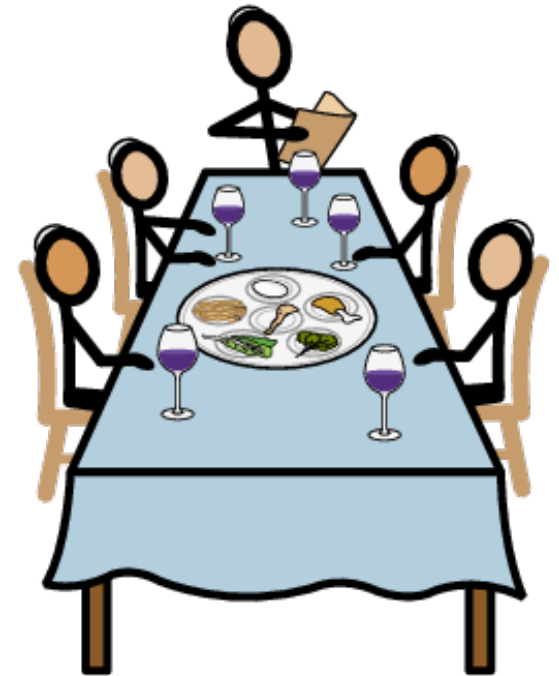
Examples of participant expertise

- A kid who knows a lot about frogs will likely have opinions about the ten plagues
- A human rights activist will likely have insights about slavery
- Educators and kids tend to have opinions about responding to the four children
- A decorator might have thoughts on the difference between idolatry and beautiful religious spaces

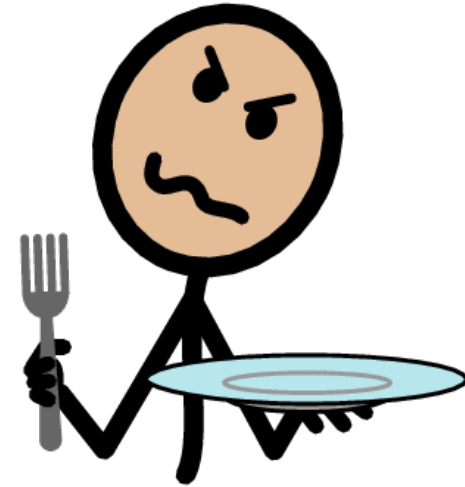


Setting the stage for success

- Avoiding intolerable hunger
- (People who want you to stop talking so they can eat probably don't want to listen).
- Creating meaningful ways to participate.
- (People who feel disconnected don't ask either.)



The importance of avoiding intolerable hunger

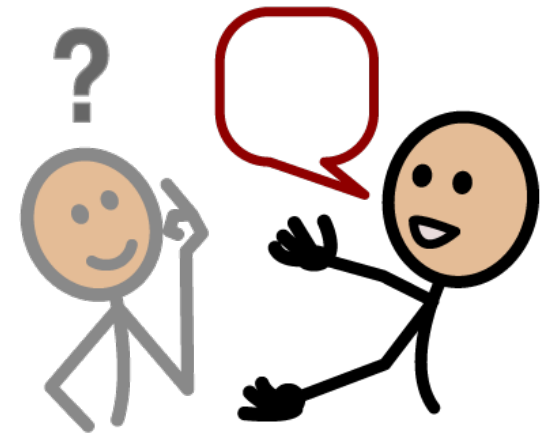


- Getting between unwillingly hungry people and food doesn't often go well
- When questions mean waiting longer for food, people are often reluctant to ask them.
- Planning to avoid intolerable hunger can make a huge difference.
- The best way to do this is different for different families and different communities.



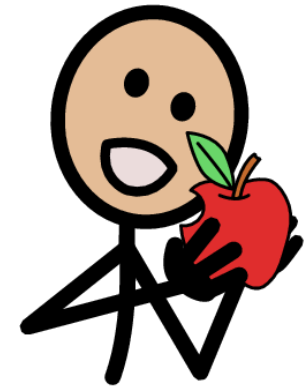
Options for avoiding intolerable hunger

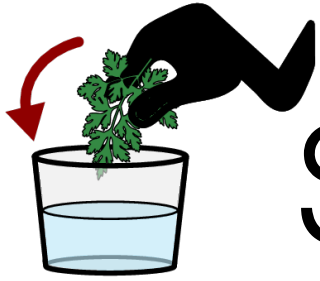
- Eating before candle lighting.
- Using substantial food for karpas.
- Planning to make snacks available to those who might need them.



Eating before candle lighting

- Some people have the custom of eating a small meal or big snack before candle lighting.
- This helps to avoid grumpy hunger during the seder. (Especially for children who are used to eating relatively early in the evening.)





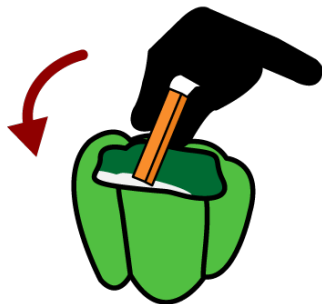
Substantial karpas



- The form of the seder comes from ancient world formal meals (such as the Greek symposium) enjoyed by high-ranking people.
- Karpas comes from the idea that when free people have formal fancy meals, they start with a dipped appetizer.
- Many are bringing back the custom of using substantial appetizers.
- When karpas is a substantial appetizer, people are much less likely to spend the maggid hangry.

What can be karpas?

- Karpas food needs to be something that can be dipped in something else.
- It's ok to have several types of food out.
- It's ok to leave the karpas out during the maggid.
- Karpas shouldn't include matzah or anything with matzah in it. (because that part comes later in the seder.)



Some karpas possibilities

- Strawberries and chocolate syrup
- Dried fruit and melted chocolate
- Chips and guacamole
- Carrots/celery and spinach dip
- Artichokes and mayonnaise
- (For those who eat kitniyot, hummus can be a good karpas option)



Making snacks available


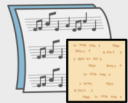



- If substantial karpas isn't a good option for your group, making snacks available away from the table might be an option.
- (Particularly for children. If kids come into the kitchen looking for food during the maggid, it's worth erring on the side of letting them have a snack.)
- (If you know that you will be hangry, it may be worth bringing some kosher-for-Passover snacks to eat discretely.)

Helping people to understand what is going on

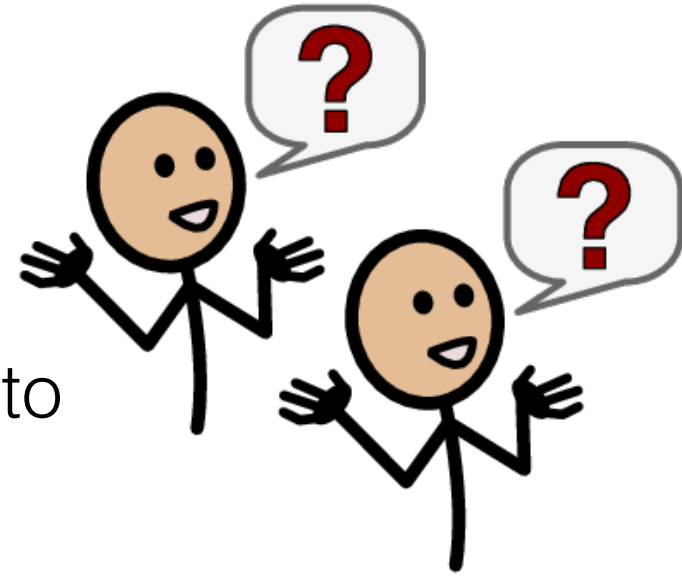
- Our printable Seder Visual Schedule shows participants what to expect
- (And where they are in the seder.)
- When the seder is more transparent, it's less overwhelming, and less likely to be boring.
- <https://matankids.org/full-seder-visual-schedule/>

Second cup - maggid



	Maggid מגיד Telling the story and asking questions
	Ha Lakhama Anya This is the bread of affliction
	Pour the second cup
	The four questions
	Avadim Hayinu We were slaves

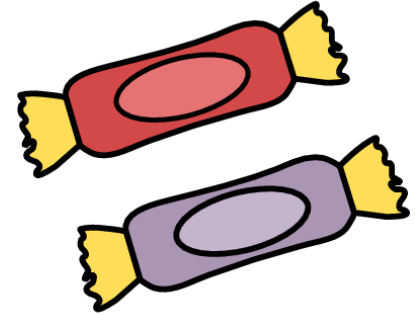
Creating ways to ask questions



- Most people know “you are supposed to ask questions at the seder”.
- People usually need more than that to be able to *actually* ask questions.
- What can we do to support question-asking?

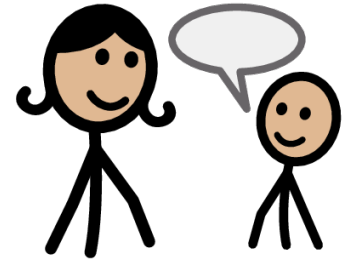


Candy-for-questions

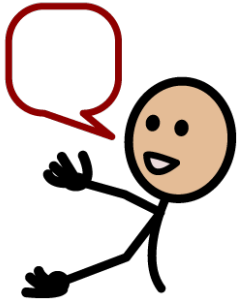


- If you're leading, make it known at the beginning of the seder that whenever people ask a question, they get a piece of candy — and follow through each time.
- (Or a frog, or a raffle ticket, or something like that.)
- This works well for both children and adults.
- On the simplest level, this incentivizes questions, but it also does something more important.

Giving people permission to ask questions

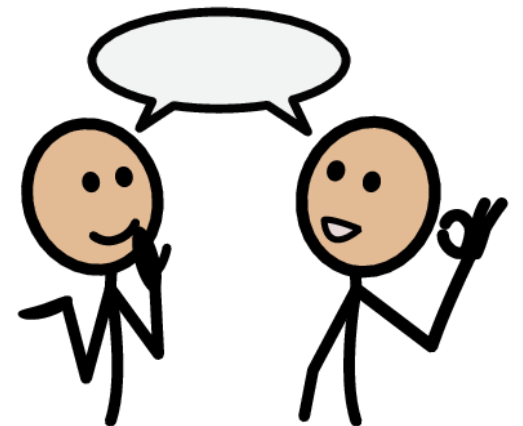


- Incentives aren't the main reason that rewards are useful — it's mostly about communication.
- Offering rewards for questions communicates that you *mean it* when you say that questions are welcome.
- It also gives people who might feel embarrassed about their questions plausible deniability — they can pretend that they are just doing it for the candy.



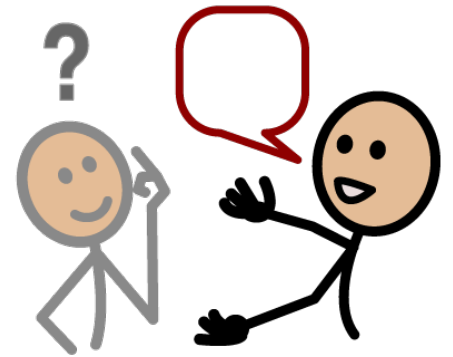
Thanking people for their questions

- Thanking people for asking questions also sends the message that you're serious about welcoming them.
- It also reassures people who may have felt hesitant or insecure about their question.
- (And others who are watching.)



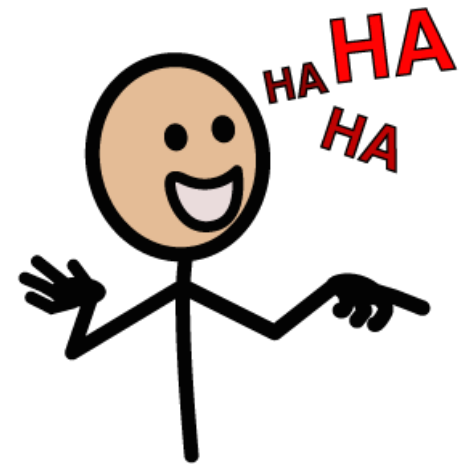
Take questions seriously

- Sincere questions are often misinterpreted as jokes.
- People who ask very basic questions sometimes get laughed at.
- It's hard to ask questions if you think people might laugh.
- If someone asks a question, assume that it is a serious question even if you think it might not be.



If someone is laughed at...

- Don't laugh yourself.
- Wait a few seconds for the laughter to stop.
- Ask them if they meant it seriously/if they would like an answer.
- (Or just answer the question.)
- When a respectful tone is set, the conversation opens up dramatically



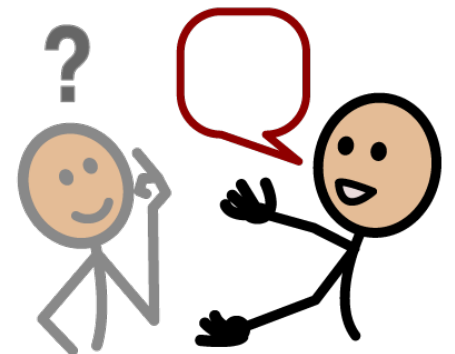
Helping people ask without talking over them



- Some people have trouble articulating their questions.
- They might need your help to figure out how to ask clearly — be careful about answering too soon!
- Also be careful about speaking for your children or others you are supporting — their questions and yours may be different.

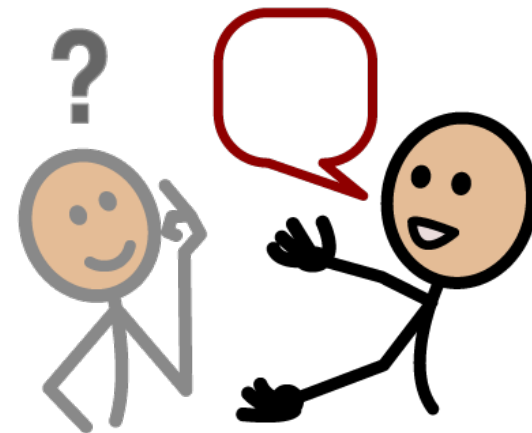
“Or something else?” method for supporting communication

- Make your best guess about what someone’s asking. (eg: Are they asking why we eat matzah?)
- Then check by asking “Are you asking why we eat matzah, or something else?”
- Keep guessing until you get it right, then answer.



“I’m not sure what you’re asking yet, but I want to know”.

- When people know that you care, they’re more likely to keep trying.
- Don’t assume it goes without saying — say it!



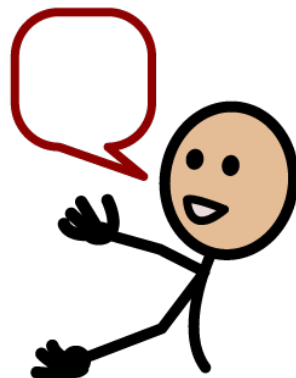
Noticing bias and silence

- Are women and girls getting the chance to speak?
- Are people with disabilities getting the chance to speak?
- Are their questions taken seriously?
- Are they getting credit for their contributions and insights?



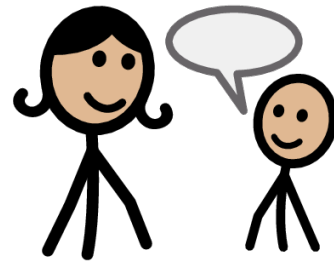
If you notice that someone isn't being taken seriously...

- ...be proactive about taking them seriously yourself!
- If someone is interrupted, you can un-interrupt them!
- “Sarah, I was wondering about that too. What do you think the answer might be?”
- “I think that’s what Rachel was saying.”.



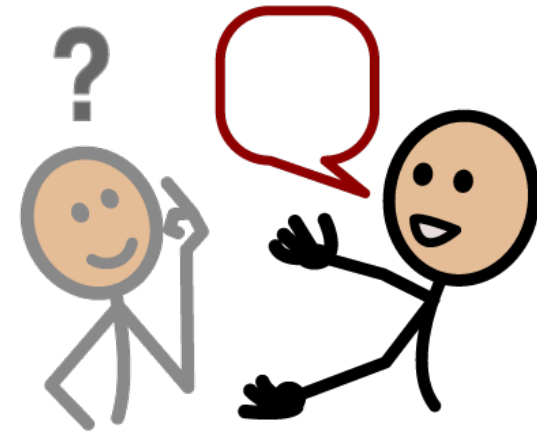
Check in with people who might need support in being taken seriously.

- Sometimes it doesn't work to check in front of the whole group.
- It can be worth checking in with them one-on-one at some other point during the meal or afterwards.
- (Points at which people are getting up to get food are often good times to do this.)
- It can be really helpful to know that you saw it too.



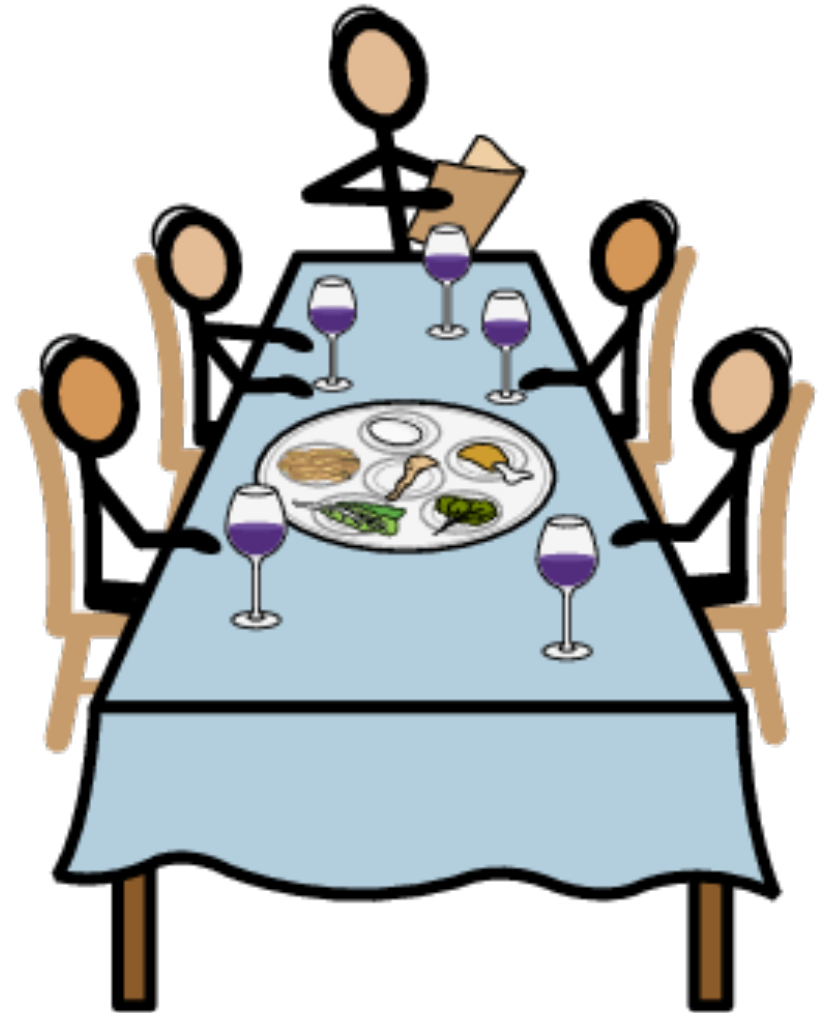
Ask questions that others might want answers to

- (You can do this as a leader or a participant.)
- Sometimes people have questions but aren't sure it's ok to ask or are embarrassed to admit that they don't know.
- If you think that might be happening, asking the question yourself can help!



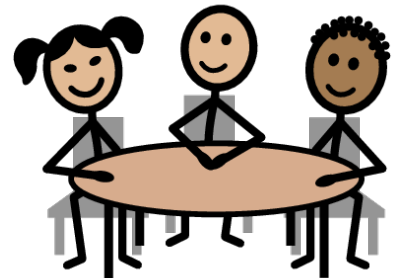
How can leaders solicit questions?

- Sometimes it helps to mix it up a little!



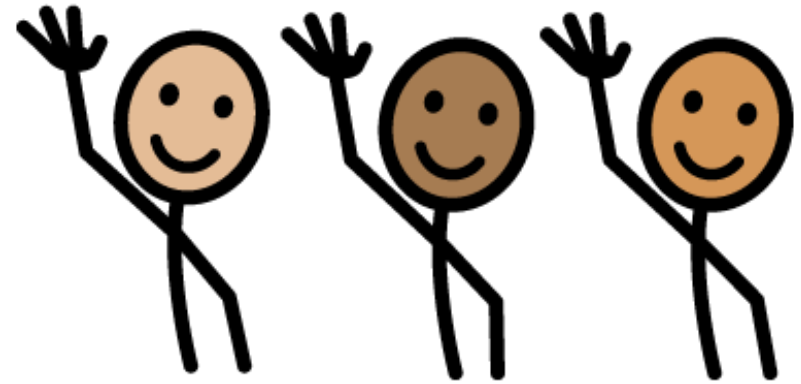
Going around the table

- Ask a question to the whole group, eg “Why do we remember that were slaves in Egypt?”
- Go around the table and give everyone the opportunity to answer the question.
- (Or go around the table giving people the opportunity to *ask* questions.)
- (Also give people a way to pass without being made fun of.)
- (This can also be mixed with taking turns to read)





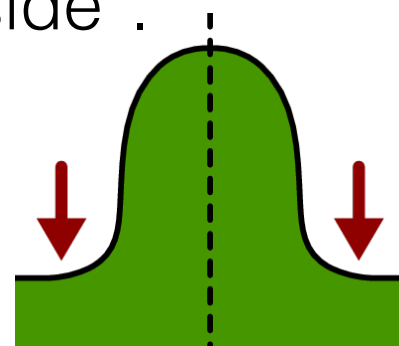
Polling



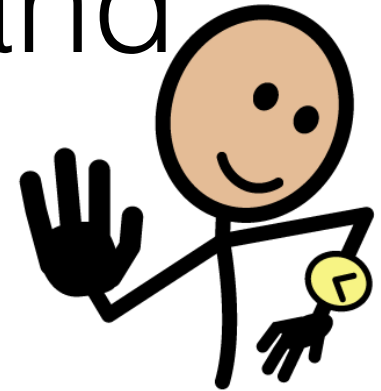
- Asking for a show of hands (or thumbs-up/thumbs-down on an opinion question can open the conversation.
- Eg: “Do you think the Egyptians deserved the ten plagues”?
- This can show people that it’s ok to have a range of opinions, and to not be sure.

This side that side game

- Ask participants to go to one side of the room if they agree with something, and the other side if they disagree
- Eg: “Dayenu says it would have been enough if God had taken us out of Egypt but not done the plagues. If you think it would have been enough, go to the left side, if you think it wouldn’t have, go to the right side”.
- This brings in movement — and creates a way to express an opinion without having to speak.
- You can also ask people to explain their opinions.



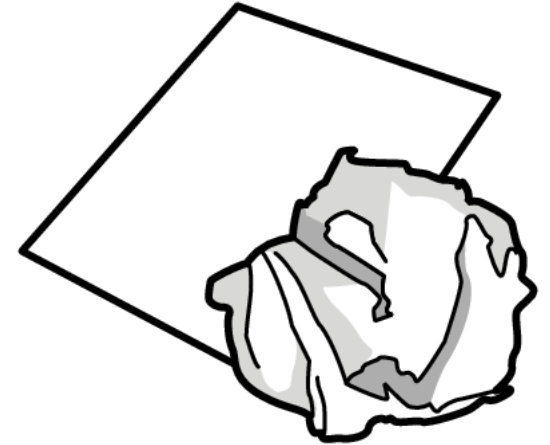
Pausing for questions and the 7 second rule.



- Pause periodically to ask who would like to ask a question.
- Wait seven seconds before going on. (This gives people processing time.)
- If there are people present who have intellectual disabilities or communication disabilities, wait longer.

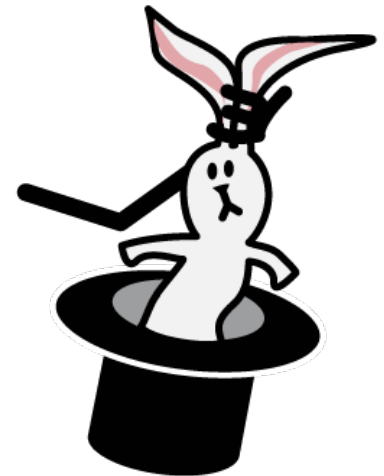
Question-starter slips

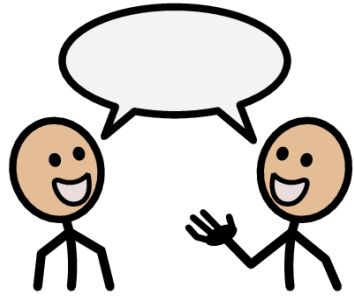
- Write questions on pieces of paper.
- Put the papers at the place settings.
- Let people ask each other those questions.
- (This can also be an entry point for people who are asking a question to get candy.)



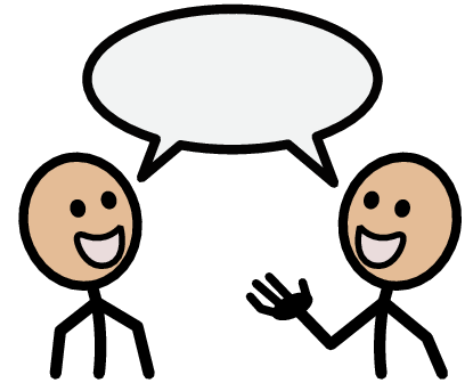
Pulling questions out of a hat

- Put slips of paper with questions on them in a hat.
- (And/or let people write their own to go into the hat.)
- Periodically ask people to draw a question from the hat — then discuss it as a group.

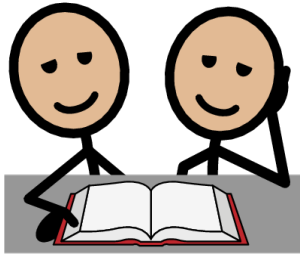




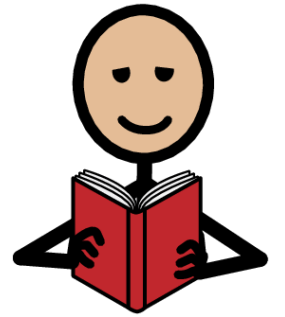
Pair share



- Ask people to discuss a question with the person next to them.
- Many people are more comfortable talking to one person than the whole group.
- It also allows more people to speak and get attention at the same time.
- Come back together and ask pairs if any of them would like to share with the group.



Reading materials



- Some people would rather check a book before asking questions.
- (Or would rather look in a book to inform their questions, or would rather get answers from a book.)
- Haggadahs with clear translation and interesting commentary
- Offering a selection of different haggadot
- Supplements
- <https://www.haggadot.com> is a good resource for this



Creating space away from the table

- Sometimes the most meaningful conversations happen in the kitchen, or off to the side.
- Sometimes people need to be able to wander in and out.
- Sometimes people need to spend some time alone to process.

Remember that silence is not absence

- Not everyone is comfortable speaking up in front of groups.
- Some people take longer to process.
- Sometimes questions are asked days later, or next year.
- It's likely that some people are always going to be more outgoing than others, and that's ok.

Remember that our story
needs everyone's voice.

“And even if we were all wise,
all experts, all elders, all
knowledgeable about the
Torah, it would be a
commandment upon us to tell
the story of the exodus from
Egypt.”



Matan Jewish Disability Acceptance and Inclusion Pledge

- I acknowledge that ability, disability and humanity coexist, and I pledge to see my students as they are.
- I will not look past their disabilities; I will seek to understand. I will not overlook their abilities; I will seek to support them effectively.
- I will not ignore the humanity of my students; I will remember that they have individual interests and a perspective of their own and that they were each created in the image of God.

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