



Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month

# Lesson Plans

*5th Grade & Up*



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## *Be An Upstander, Not a Bystander*

*Recommended for 5th Grade & Up*

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### **Big Ideas**

- Understanding the power of words as it relates to bullying, disability and respect.
- Understanding the idea of *Lo Aleiha*, “It is not upon you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”
- Understanding the importance of standing up when you see something happening that you know is wrong.

### **Objectives**

- Students will become familiar with the concepts of upstander (people who take a stand against injustice, and when they see wrong being done, they step in to stop it)
- Students will become familiar with the concept of bystander (people who witness a wrong being done but do not respond to it through action)
- Students will be introduced to the idea of “*Lo Aleiha*” Pirke Avot 2:21 “It is not upon you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”
- Encourage and inspire positive skills and responses as an upstander.

### **Materials**

- Video: The Consequences of Words  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYYSFpFGRBE&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhScOdC3xMzs9FoAAfpxA-Tz&index=6>
- Response Cards (sample attached)  
1. Interrupt and Engage 2. Report/Ask for help 3. Not sure

### **Accessibility Considerations**

For any lesson you plan, we encourage you to think about the students in the room and how to avoid potential barriers to individuals’ successful participation. The list that follows addresses accessibility considerations for the various activities offered in this particular lesson, with some explanation so that you can extrapolate them to future classroom experiences.



- Think about emotional tone as it might affect students with disabilities - make sure they are not being used as object lessons.
- Assume that there are students with disabilities in the room whether or not you know who they are.
- Consider physical limitations of students with disabilities and modify/change the movement activities in the *mifgash* (meeting, encounter) as appropriate.
- Visual considerations: Students who are blind may need an audio description with an embedded voice to translate visual imagery and action into the spoken word.
- Students with motor impairments may need an alternative means for fine motor task such as using technology to record their answers during the brainstorming activity
- Literacy: Some students may need questions read to them. Allow drawing as an option for students who are more comfortable with that.
- Make more than one type of writing implement available (this can make or break someone's ability to write, and informal writing implements like crayons can be more socially comfortable for some students).
- Make sure the students have text and questions in a format in an accessible format (e.g.: large print, electronic copy, braille)
- Some students may need help reading articles, texts and questions or may benefit from having the materials prior to the lesson
- Allow students the opportunity to opt out of verbally participating in any of the activities. Participation by writing, drawing if that is more comfortable for the student should be encouraged.

## ACTIVITIES

### Activity #1: *Mifgash* (meeting, encounter)

Ask students to complete the following activities:

Touch your elbow if someone has ever said something mean to you.

Touch your nose if you have ever said something mean to someone else.

Pat your head if you have ever watched someone be mean to someone else and it made you feel uncomfortable.

Questions for the group to think about and discuss: Think about how you felt if something mean was said to you. Think about how you felt when you said something mean to someone else. If you ever watched someone be mean to someone else and you were uncomfortable, think about why that was the case. Do you wish you acted differently in that situation?



## Activity #2: Response Card Activity

Allow the students time to read the following blog post.

*Following an incident in school, Rafi (age 14) posted his thoughts on Facebook. Rafi has granted permission to Matan to reprint this post here.*

I'd like to talk about something I have noticed when it comes to Autism and the language some of my peers use. My goal is to teach, not to lecture. I will not be naming names or condemning any individuals, but simply pointing out what went wrong.

In recent years, the R-Word (a word used to bully Neurodivergent people) has become less used. Instead, I have been hearing a word replace it, a word that has disastrous effects for the Autistic community. That word is "Autism" or "Autistic".

Today I heard a student describe another student as a "retard" and as "so Autistic". And yes, I did ask, neither of the students are on the spectrum. At that moment, I struggled whether to speak up. I didn't go far, didn't say anything about them saying "so Autistic". I just told them not to use the R-Word, but I am still thinking about it. Should I have opened up about being Autistic? If this happened again, I am not quite sure what I would do, and I doubt I am the only one facing this dilemma.

Using the term "autistic" or "has autism" to express that someone is being dumb is something primarily concentrated in younger generations, especially on social media. You can find meme after meme of an annoying shrieking noise with a caption like "autistic screeching". I have seen online comments calling people "autistic" if they say/do something that is perceived as annoying/weird.

This is extremely detrimental to the Autistic community. I hear a lot about "Autism Awareness" and I know that almost everyone knows that the Autism Spectrum exists. The problem is people are not educated about Autism.

Autism is as it is called, a spectrum. Not all people on the spectrum shriek or are sensitive to light/noise. One person on the spectrum might need to go to a home/facility to be in an optimal environment. I needed more support when I was in elementary school and over time and as I grew up, what I needed changed. Education, acceptance and working on an individual scale are key.

So especially to the educators and community leaders out there, please speak out if you hear people using the words Autism or Autistic in a negative way. Most people who say these types of things are just uneducated about the topic. We can change that.

I want to end with a simple thing. Don't feel bad if you have ever had or communicated misconceptions about the spectrum in the past. We all make mistakes, simply taking the time to read the post is very helpful. Thank you all!! And feel more than welcome to share.

Give the students some time to reflect on what they read and discuss the following:

- The R-word and the term "autistic" can be used as insults. The use of these words is a slur that demeans individuals with disabilities and is unacceptable.

- Communicate to students that there are multiple ways to deal with a situation of bullying or name calling.

Pass out response cards (each student should have 3 options) and ask the students to raise the response card that feels most appropriate for them to use in the following situations.

1. You are a middle school student, and you are working in a small group with a few other students. At one point a boy in the group says to another student, “You are such a spaz.”
2. You are having a conversation with a friend about how you organized your materials for the upcoming math test by color coding the materials. She responds to you by saying, “You are so OCD.”
3. You are having lunch with a group of your friends when you overhear a conversation at the other end of the lunch table. A boy is yelling at another boy saying in a loud voice, “Don’t even think of sitting with us you “R-word.””

Talk about the pros and cons of the different actions on the response cards.

### Activity #3: *Lo Aleiha* Upstander Activity

Ask the students to help you figure out the meaning of *Lo aleiha*.

לֹא עָלֶיךָ הַמְלָאכָה לְגִמּוֹר, וְלֹא אַתָּה בֶן-חֹרִין לְהִבָּטֵל מִמְנָה.

פְּרָקִי אֲבוֹתַי, כִּי־אֵי

*Lo aleiha ha'mlacha ligmor v'lo atah ben-chorin l'hibatel mimenah.*

**It is not upon you to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.**

Pirke Avot 2:21

The first two words in Hebrew means “it is not upon you.” Another way of thinking about this idea is that it is NOT your duty (to complete the work), but it is a message that you DO need to do your very best to try to make the world a better place for everyone. When a person sees a situation that needs his/her/their help he/she/they should understand that this a “*Lo aleiha* moment”. They HAVE to see if they can do something about it. Discuss the concepts of “upstander” (people who take a stand against injustice, and when they see wrong being done, they step in to stop it) and “bystander” (people who witness a wrong being done but do not respond to it through action). Discuss how the concepts of “upstander” and “bystander” relate to “*Lo aleiha* moments”.

What can you say to be an upstander?

Students can develop a list of phrases or statements that they feel comfortable using when they hear or see name calling or bullying.

Pass a beanbag around and ask each student to offer a statement that they might use. Offer examples and give students time to think about what they might share. Also allow students to pass if they don't have a statement to share at this time.



Examples:

Don't listen to that—it isn't true.

How would you feel if someone said that to you?

Stop doing that.

We don't treat people like that here!

You may not realize, but that word can be hurtful.

**Discussion questions:**

- a. Do you think that it is easier to be an upstander or a bystander?
- b. Why don't more bystanders intervene?
- c. What are the risks of standing up? Of not standing up?
- d. Who is an upstander you admire? What did they do? What character traits helped him/her to be an upstander?

Watch video

The Consequences of Words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYYSEpFGRBE&list=PLvzOwE5lWqhScOdC3xMzs9FoAAfpxA-Tz&index=6>

Exit Slip (handout)

Students can respond to the prompt: When I witness bullying one thing I can say...

Print and separate into 3 cards for each student

# HANDOUT 1: Response Cards

Print and separate into 3 cards for each student.

## Interrupt and Engage



## Ask for help



## Not sure

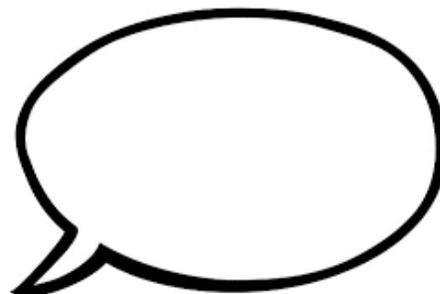


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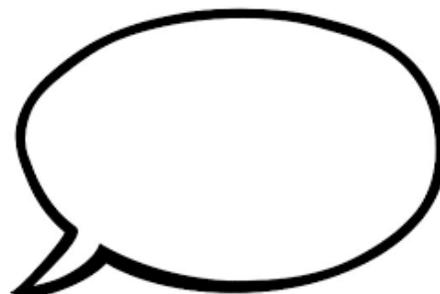
## HANDOUT 2: Exit Slips

Print and separate into 3 cards, one for each student.

One thing that I can say to the bully when I witness it.



One thing that I can say to the bully when I witness it.



One thing that I can say to the bully when I witness it.

