

Program Title: Tikkun Olam vs. Tikkun Midot: Is it Wrong to Help Myself?

Category: Jewish Learning

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Created for: NFTY-NE December Institute

Touchstone Text: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?" –Hillel

Goals: To teach Program Participants (PP's) about the concept of *Tikkun Midot*, repairing the self, and how it related to *Tikkun Olam*, repairing the world.

Objectives: PP's will engage in a 'Choose Your Own Adventure' game, where they must make a choice between the socially accepted *Tikkun Olam* and the often shunned *Tikkun Midot*. They will also discuss the pros and cons of each concept. They will then get to make pins with choice making slogans

Enduring Understanding: There is a fine line between *Tikkun Midot* and greed; and *Tikkun Olam* and neglect. It is possible, and important, to find a balance between these ideals. And while the two appear to be polar extremes- they are more closely related than they seem upon first look.

Materials:

Tape
Scenario cut outs
signs to label scenarios
pins
markers

People:

Roamer- Kyla
Group 1- Leah
Group 2- Sarah
Group 3- Jeremy
Group 4- Safina
Group 5- Elana
Group 6- Jonah
Group 7- Arielle
Group 8- Jenna
Group 9- Sam

Space needed:

Beit Am
Program room
Lobby

Time Table:

00:00-00:05 – Introduction/ Splitting up into universes
00:05-00:20 – Choose Your Own Adventure (Social Action Style)
00:20-00:25- Split up into Groups
00:25-00:45- Discussion Questions
00:45-00:50- Regroup
00:50-01:05- Wrap Up

Detailed Procedure:

Introduction

00:00-00:05

1. Roamer (Kyla) will tell the PP's: During this program you will be asked to make several choices. When the program begins you must read the quotes on the wall and then follow the instructions based on your choice. Answer the questions as honestly as possible- don't think about what you think the "correct" answer is- but the answer which is right for you. You are probably all very familiar with Hillel's quote, *If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?* But I ask you to think about the first two lines of this quote again- decide for yourself which part of this quote you think is more important or morally correct. *If I am not for myself, then who will be for me?* If this is paramount in your mind please move to the right side of the program room – when I say to. *And if I am only for myself, then what am I?* If you believe that this is the most important aspect of the quote then please move to the left side of the room when I say to. Okay GO! (wait a few seconds) If you cannot decide which is more important – please stay move to the stage.

Board please help in facilitating this process.

Chose Your Own Adventure! (Social Action Style)

00:05-00:20

1. By answering the previous question the PP's have unknowingly placed themselves in three separate universes - universe A (Tikkun Midot), B (Tikkun Olam), and C (Undecided). Because there is no way to know how many PP's will go to each group GL's will not know which universe they are leading until the program actually starts. At this point Kyla will break up the GL's and assign them to a universe. They will then lead their Universe to their designated area.

(Universe A (Tikkun Midot) = Program Room

Universe B (Tikkun Olam) = Lobby

Universe C (Undecided) = Beit AM)

*The following scenarios (see attached) will be posted around the room of each universe. PP's should move around the room reading the scenarios and following the pertinent instructions. Group Leaders (GL's) should assist this process. **Once the PP's have cycled through each scenario please split them up into even groups** (example- There are about 20 PP's in Universe A. So, Kyla assigns two GL to this universe. Each GL will grab ten PP's and move onto the next part of the program)*

Discussion Questions

00:25-00:45

Universe A

1. (00:25-00:27) **GL** have PP's do a mini-mixer: Ask them to share their name, age, TYG, and one decision they made today (outside of the program)
2. (00:27-00:35) **GL asks:** What types of things do you take into consideration when you are making decision about:
 - a. Relationships with family and friends
 - b. school work
 - c. hobbies/extra curricular
 - d. religion
3. **GL asks:** So you were asked to make a lot of decisions in the past ten minutes or so- were some of the decisions harder to make than others? Which decisions were the hardest?
4. **GL asks:** What made them difficult to answer?

5. **GL asks:** Do you think that there needs to be a healthy balance between taking care of yourself and taking care of those around you?
6. **GL asks:** Think back to the first choice you made in the program: you felt that the first part of Hillel's quote, *If I am not for myself, then who will be for me*, to be paramount in this phrase. What exactly does this part of the quote mean?
This is the concept of Tikkun Midot (repairing or healing the self)
7. **GL asks:** Do you see any pattern in the types of questions that were asked- or the types of choices which were given?
The choices are all examples of tikkun olam (repairing/helping the world/others) or tikkun midot (repairing/helping the self).
8. **GL asks:** When answering the questions do you think you always made the "correct" choice? Do you think that in some of the situations you made the easier or "selfish choice?" Which scenarios?
*Keep in mind that one should **always** practice Tikkun Olam, unless the act itself would cause you physical or mental harm (which is where the concept of Tikkun Midot comes into play.)*
9. (00:35-00:45) **GL reads (or has PP's take turns reading):**
*There was once a Rabbi who wanted nothing more than to live like his Rabbi, whom he saw studying all the time. So to do this, the Rabbi begins to study day and night, nonstop for several days. He puts so much effort into studying Torah that he soon forgets to take care of himself- he stops eating, drinking, and cleaning himself. Thus, he soon becomes very ill. His Rabbi then comes to visit with him. The younger Rabbi asks his mentor, "I've been studying so hard- studying day and night. Why am I not living as well as you? Is studying Torah not righteous?" To which the elder Rabbi responds, "It is more important to take care of *yourself*, and to keep healthy. This way you may be healthy when you study Torah."
- *It is said that if you are traveling in the desert and your companions run out of water, if there are even a few drops of water left in your canteen- that water is yours. You are not to share it, but to drink it yourself.
10. **GL asks:** What is the point of this story? This quote?
Story: that being healthy is righteous- more righteous than studying Torah. Thus it is more important to take care of yourself than it is to study. (tikkun midot)
Quote: It is okay to protect yourself- not only in a life or death situation, but when it comes to protecting your mental, physical, and/or emotional well being. (tikkun midot)
11. **GL asks:** Why do you think that this concept is important?
GL reads (or has PP's take turns reading):
*A man had been searching for the Prophet Elijah for days. When he was unable to find him he eventually went to his Rabbi and asked him where Elijah could be found. The Rabbi told the man that if he went to the edge of the town, where those with Leprosy had been quarantined, he would find Elijah. The man did not want to visit Elijah, if he was with the Lepers- for Elijah too must have Leprosy. However, the man decided to seek out Elijah anyway. When he reached the edge of town, where Elijah was, the man watched a perfectly healthy Elijah removing and rewrapping bandages on the Lepers. The bandages were dirty and pus filled, and without regular changing they caused the Lepers much pain. Elijah was risking his own life to lessen the pain of those around him.
- *There is a man who has done many unholy things in his life, so an angel decides to intervene and take him to see Heaven and Hell. The angel first takes the man to hell, where huge banquet table, covered with the most delectable foods that have ever been tasted. Around the table hundreds are seated, ready to eat, yet their elbows are broken so that they are unable to reach the food. They try repeatedly – but are never able to reach the food. Then the angel takes him to Heaven. The man looks around him and sees the same see- a beautiful banquet table covered in palatable treats, with broken elbowed persons gathered around it. However in Heaven the people do not try in vain to feed themselves, but graciously feed each other.
12. **GL asks:** What is the point in these stories? What are they teaching?
They teach Tikkun Olam- that it is important to help those around you- Tikkun Olam however is not about going to the extreme, you should only help others when you are not risking your own health (mental and physical).
13. **GL asks:** Why do you think that his concept is important?
14. **GL asks:** Can you think of any other Jewish concepts or stories that apply to either of these ideas? (olam or midot)

Tikkun Olam: Gemilut Hasadim- acts of love and kindness; Haken Takim Imo- you shall surely lift up with him/ law designed to aid to anyone in distress even ones enemy; Rodef- obligation of the bystander to intervene and prevent the murder or injury of innocent victims, even if it means killing the aggressor

Tikkun Midot: "If someone comes to kill you, kill him first."- Talmud.

15. **GL asks:** Do you think these stories/quotes contradict each other? Do you think it is possible to practice both *Tikkun Olam* and *Tikkun Midot*?

When instructed to do so have PP's reconvene in the Beit Am.

Universe B

1. (00:25-00:27)**GL** have PP's do a mini-mixer: Ask them to share their name, age, TYG, and one decision they made today (outside of the program)
2. (00:27-00:35)**GL asks:** What types of things do you take into consideration when you are making decision about:
 - a. Relationships with friends and family
 - b. school work
 - c. hobbies/extra curricular
 - d. religion
3. **GL asks:** So you were asked to make a lot of decisions in the past ten minutes or so- were some of the decisions harder to make than others? Which decisions were the hardest?
4. **GL asks:** What made them difficult to answer?
5. **GL asks:** Do you think that there needs to be a healthy balance between taking care of yourself and taking care of those around you?
6. **GL asks:** Think back to the first choice you made in the program: you felt that the second part of Hillel's quote, *And if I am only for myself, then what am I*, to be paramount in this phrase. What exactly does this part of the quote mean?
This is the concept of Tikkun Olam (repairing or healing the world)
7. **GL asks:** Do you see any pattern in the types of questions that were asked- or the types of choices which were given?
The choices are all examples of tikkun olam (repairing/helping the world/others) or tikkun midot (repairing/helping the self).
8. **GL asks:** When answering the questions do you think you always made the "correct" choice? Do you think that in some of the situations you made the easier or "selfish choice?" Which scenarios?
*Keep in mind that one should **always** practice Tikkun Olam, unless the act itself would cause you physical or mental harm (which is where the concept of Tikkun Midot comes into play.)*
9. (00:35-00:45)**GL reads (or has PP's take turns reading):**
*There was once a Rabbi who wanted nothing more than to live like his Rabbi, whom he saw studying all the time. So to do this, the Rabbi begins to study day and night, nonstop for several days. He puts so much effort into studying Torah that he soon forgets to take care of himself- he stops eating, drinking, and cleaning himself. Thus, he soon becomes very ill. His Rabbi then comes to visit with him. The younger Rabbi asks his mentor, "I've been studying so hard- studying day and night. Why am I not living as well as you? Is studying Torah not righteous?" To which the elder Rabbi responds, "It is more important to take care of *yourself*, and to keep healthy. This way you may be healthy when you study Torah."
- *It is said that if you are traveling in the desert and your companions run out of water, if there are even a few drops of water left in your canteen- that water is yours. You are not to share it, but to drink it yourself.
10. **GL asks:** What is the point of this story? This quote?
11. *Story: that being healthy is righteous- more righteous than studying Torah. Thus it is more important to take care of yourself than it is to study. (tikkun midot)*
Quote: It is okay to protect yourself- not only in a life or death situation, but when it comes to protecting your mental, physical, and/or emotional well being. (tikkun midot)

12. **GL asks:** Why do you think that this concept is important?

GL reads (or has PP's take turns reading):

*A man had been searching for the Prophet Elijah for days. When he was unable to find him he eventually went to his Rabbi and asked him where Elijah could be found. The Rabbi told the man that if he went to the edge of the town, where those with Leprosy had been quarantined, he would find Elijah. The man did not want to visit Elijah, if he was with the Lepers- for Elijah too must have Leprosy. However, the man decided to seek out Elijah anyway. When he reached the edge of town, where Elijah was, the man watched a perfectly healthy Elijah removing and rewrapping bandages on the Lepers. The bandages were dirty and pus filled, and without regular changing they caused the Lepers much pain. Elijah was risking his own life to lessen the pain of those around him.

*There is a man who has done many unholy things in his life, so an angel decides to intervene and take him to see Heaven and Hell. The angel first takes the man to hell, where a huge banquet table, covered with the most delectable foods that have ever been tasted. Around the table hundreds are seated, ready to eat, yet their elbows are broken so that they are unable to reach the food. They try repeatedly – but are never able to reach the food. Then the angel takes him to Heaven. The man looks around him and sees the same see- a beautiful banquet table covered in palatable treats, with broken elbowed persons gathered around it. However in Heaven the people do not try in vain to feed themselves, but graciously feed each other.

13. **GL asks:** What is the point in these stories? What are they teaching?
They teach Tikkun Olam- that it is important to help those around you- Tikkun Olam however is not about going to the extreme, you should only help others when you are not risking your own health (mental and physical).
14. **GL asks:** Why do you think that his concept is important?
15. **GL asks:** Can you think of any other Jewish concepts or stories that apply to either of these ideas? (olam or midot)
Tikkun Olam: Gemilut Hasadim- acts of love and kindness; Haken Takim Imo- you shall surely lift up with him/ law designed to aid to anyone in distress even ones enemy; Rodef- obligation of the bystander to intervene and prevent the murder or injury of innocent victims, even if it means killing the aggressor
Tikkun Midot: "If someone comes to kill you, kill him first."- Talmud.
16. **GL asks:** Do you think these stories/quotes contradict each other? Do you think it is possible to practice both *Tikkun Olam* and *Tikkun Midot*?

When instructed to do so have PP's reconvene in the Beit Am.

Universe C

- (00:25-00:27)**GL** have PP's do a mini-mixer: Ask them to share their name, age, TYG, and one decision they made today (outside of the program)
- (00:27-00:35)**GL asks:** What types of things do you take into consideration when you are making decision about:
 - Relationships with family and friends
 - school work
 - hobbies/extra curricular
 - religion
- GL asks:** So you were asked to make a lot of decisions in the past ten minutes or so- were some of the decisions harder to make than others? Which decisions were the hardest?
- GL asks:** What made them difficult to answer?
- GL asks:** Do you think that there needs to be a healthy balance between taking care of yourself and taking care of those around you?
- GL asks:** Think back to the first choice you made in the program: You were unable to decide which part of Hillel's quote, *If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I* was the most important to you. Why? What is this quote about?
This is the concept of Tikkun Olam (repairing or healing the world) and Tikkun Midot (repairing or healing (or taking care of) the self)

7. **GL asks:** Do you see any pattern in the types of questions that were asked- or the types of choices which were given?
The choices are all examples of tikkun olam (repairing/helping the world/others) or tikkun midot (repairing/helping the self).
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When instructed to do so have PP's reconvene in the Beit Am.

Wrap Up

00:50-01:05

1. (00:50-01:00) Kyla will explain that PP's will decorate pins, which they can wear, with things about making choices, or Tikkun Olam or Midot.
2. (01:00-01:05) Kyla will reiterate to PP's that you do not need to choose just Tikkun Midot or Tikkun Olam in your life- but that it is important to have a balance between the two. You must take care of yourself to be able to fully take care of those around you. While Judaism says that both of these principles are important, it is important to keep in mind that unless you are putting your own health and safety at risk by performing the act of *Tikkun Olam*, you are "Jewish-ly" obligated to help those around you.