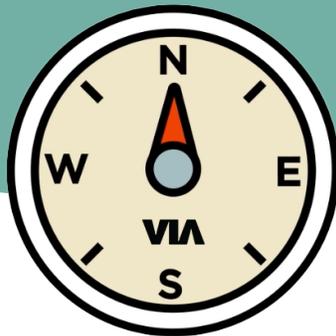




THE INSTITUTE
FOR EXPERIENTIAL
JEWISH EDUCATION

JEWISH VALUES IN ACTION

HOW CAN JEWISH VALUES HELP
US NAVIGATE MIDDLE SCHOOL?



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Middle schoolers are growing up in a fast-moving world, navigating identity, friendship, and the pressures of digital life while figuring out who they are and where they belong. These social and emotional challenges often go unaddressed in traditional curricula. Jewish Values in Action brings them to the forefront, offering space for reflection, connection, and growth through the lens of Jewish wisdom.

Students wrestle daily with deep, often unspoken tensions, such as wanting to belong and wanting to be unique, their desire to speak honestly and their need to be kind, the pull to protect their identity and the urge to stay open, and navigating the drive to stand up for what's right and longing for harmony. These are not just adolescent struggles; they are timeless human dilemmas. Through real-life scenarios, open conversation, and Jewish texts that speak to these very conflicts, students explore how values like empathy, courage, and integrity can guide their everyday choices and relationships.

Jewish Values in Action is comprised of four units, each of which has four sessions designed to be taught in 25-minute Advisory groups. **Unit 1: Finding My Place in Community** invites students to reflect on belonging, self-worth, and connection in a comparison driven culture. **Unit 2: Courageous Conversations** helps them navigate disagreement and speak up with compassion. **Unit 3: Making a Difference** empowers students to act on their values through kindness, justice, and environmental responsibility. **Unit 4: Jewish Peoplehood** helps students explore their connection to Israel, confront antisemitism, and reflect on what it means to belong to a diverse and global Jewish community.

These units are designed to take place in advisory groups, since they are small, consistent groups that meet regularly, and are a space where meaningful conversations can take place. They are the perfect setting for these units, because:

- **Advisory groups are built on trust and consistency**, which encourages open and honest conversation.
- **Sessions follow a simple structure** and do not require any additional materials, though you're welcome to include extras if you'd like.
- **The format is familiar and repeatable.** Both students and advisors learn the rhythm and gradually build confidence.
- **Any adult can facilitate** with no background in Jewish studies required. And, as students gain experience with the sessions, they can be empowered to co-facilitate or even lead sessions themselves.

SESSION STRUCTURE AND FLOW

Each unit is comprised of four short, accessible sessions, designed to be taught using a single double-sided sheet. Every session follows a consistent five-part structure:



1 **OPENING HOOK (5 MINUTES)**

Each session opens with a compelling hook, designed to capture students' attention and immediately establish relevance.



2 **JEWISH ANCHOR (5 MINUTES)**

Next, students encounter a Jewish text or teaching that speaks directly to the issue at hand. Jewish wisdom shows that these struggles are not new. They have been explored for generations, and tradition offers insight not only from the past but also for navigating the present. Guiding questions and a reflection prompt help students connect these ideas to their own lives.



3 **ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)**

Then, students engage in an interactive activity that makes the topic come alive. These experiences highlight the value tension at the heart of the session, giving students space to explore where they feel pulled and how they make sense of those competing desires.



4 **VALUES IN ACTION (5 MINUTES)**

To close, students are offered practical next steps to bring the values they've explored into their own lives. Whether it's a journaling prompt, a small behavior shift, or a reflection challenge, these actions help students turn insight into habit and keep the learning alive beyond the session.



5 **NOTES TO THE FACILITATOR**

Because many topics are sensitive and touch upon social dynamics, interpersonal relationships, and might surface intense opinions and feelings, each session includes short facilitation notes to help facilitators tailor the content for their students with care and awareness.

UNIT 1

FINDING MY PLACE IN COMMUNITY:
EXPLORING BELONGING AND EMBRACING UNIQUENESS

[Click here to view and download Unit 1](#)

UNIT 2

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS:
NAVIGATING DISAGREEMENTS & SPEAKING YOUR TRUTH

[Click here to view and download Unit 2](#)

UNIT 3

MAKING A DIFFERENCE:
PURSUING CHESED & SOCIAL ACTIVISM

[Click here to view and download Unit 3](#)

UNIT 4

JEWISH PEOPLEHOOD:
STRENGTHENING JEWISH IDENTITY & CONNECTION TO ISRAEL

[Click here to view and download Unit 4](#)

ABOUT US

M²: The Institute for Experiential Jewish Education was founded in 2016 with the belief that Jewish education can unlock meaningful and purposeful Jewish living. By offering cutting-edge professional development programs, innovative educational frameworks, and tailored consulting services, M² empowers educators and organizations to create impactful Jewish experiences. Its global network of alumni and partners continues to inspire and expand the reach of impactful Jewish education worldwide.

To learn more, reach out to contact@ieje.org.

For additional educational resources,
access the complete Values in Action
collection by scanning here:

