

May is Mental Health  
Awareness Month  
For Your Wellbeing



## Shabbos Table Talks | Week Four: Understanding & Respecting Our Differences

### Introduction

Welcome to **Shabbos Table Talks - Mental Health Edition!** Let's focus on some of the ideas that create the foundation for your family's mental health. Get ready for an interactive discussion with your family! We've set up a step-by-step guide to make it easy to talk to your family about mental health.

### Activity

#### Step 1 - Lets collect some points!

- At the Shabbos table, ask your family members to list one way that they each feel that they are different than other people and how would they like to be treated because of those differences? Each person should give one answer before going around the table again.
- **Award 1 point** to each family member who provides an answer such as: "I'm fun, so maybe allow me to make the plans", "I'm smart, so maybe ask me questions", "I'm organized, so maybe appoint me to family or school leadership positions." **Award 2 points** to anyone who makes themselves vulnerable and answers a more difficult answer like: "I'm easy to anger, so please try not to antagonize me", "I'm shy, so please help me meet and make new friends", "I have difficulty completing certain tasks, so please be patient with me." If your family has five or more points, you're already showing that you are aware of the differences we have and you are sensitive to how they affect us. A family with less than five points can be tested again after this discussion is over!

#### Step 2 - Let's Learn some Fundamental Ideas!

##### Ideas:

- Respect is not only about acting nicely to the people who you respect. It is about understanding that there are people who are different than you and respecting the differences between you and him or her.
- When you and your friends act similarly, have the same taste in clothing and like to do all of the same things, it is easy to forget that just because someone is different, it doesn't mean that they are not worth your time, and usually you can gain more from people who are different than you! There is something different about each one of us, for example: height, skin color, what country your family originated from, learning disabilities, attention/organization difficulties, a lost tooth from a fall, glasses, only child, struggles with anxiety. The major similarity between all of us is that no matter how we are different from our friends, we just want to be treated normally and nicely.

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## Examples:

- When you see someone with a disability that makes him or her look different.
- You are on a trip with friends and one of your friends is scared to go on a ride. You may have the urge to make fun of him or call him a baby.
- Your friend or sibling may have a health issue that requires him or her to use something to help with daily tasks (glasses, crutches, hearing aid, etc.).
- Ask your family: "What other examples can you share? How would that thought make you feel?"

## Step 3 - Let's Learn from Each Other

### 1. (For children of all ages)

- i. Can you give an example of when you interacted with someone who may be different than you? [If your child needs some hints: new student joins your class with no friends, helping a friend with a vision problem read something he can't see].
- ii. Can you give an example of a time where you may have a negative reaction to someone's differences and how you could change that behavior to a positive action?

### 2. (For Middle School aged children)

What can you change in your behavior or outlook to show a better level of sensitivity to those who are different than you?

### 3. (For High School aged children)

Give an example of a stereotype associated with people who are different than you and why do you think it is fair or unfair to make that assumption?

## Conclusion

As we go through this week, let's remember to be aware of the people around us who may be different than us and make a special effort to be sensitive to how they are affected by those differences. Hashem created a world where we are all different and that gives us the opportunity to be doing chesed with each other on a regular basis. In addition to the physical help we can offer, we can also help emotionally by showing acceptance and understanding and by realizing that despite our unique attributes, we are less different than we are the same.

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"Shabbos Table Talks - Mental Health Edition" has been designed by the team of Our Path SEL, a fully developed, research based, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Curriculum designed specifically for the Orthodox Jewish Schools, in partnership with the OU ([www.ou.org/mental-health](http://www.ou.org/mental-health)). For more information, and to encourage your school to sign up, visit [www.OurPathSEL.org](http://www.OurPathSEL.org). Our Path SEL is a project of Amudim ([www.amudim.org](http://www.amudim.org)).

