

CONVERSATION STARTER 5

Introduction: The **Mishpachah: Modern Jewish Family Project** focuses our attention on the diversity of the families that make up our communities. Who are they? What do they look like? How welcoming and inclusive are we no matter the family structure?

The first step in promoting pluralism is to understand the importance of our communication, whether in direct conversation, when speaking about each other, or when we write or email, etc.

Many of these Conversation Starters are from the personal experiences of diverse families in our communities and are found in the August material, “Beginning the Conversation.” Others were taken from everyday sources such as synagogue bulletins and conversations.

Over the next year, as we become more attuned to the effects of language, we will reinforce the wisdom of Proverbs: *mavet ve-chayyim beyad lashon* (death and life are in the power of the tongue). In other words, language counts!

Thanks to the members of the PAC for creating these discussion questions.



Read the Conversation Starter before a meeting or event and then open it up for discussion. You will be amazed at the response.

People would often ask me if things were getting better [following the death of her husband]... We get better when we recover from an illness, but we do not recover after losing a partner who never comes back, as our health hopefully does.

Discussion questions

- What strikes you about this speaker’s response about getting better?
- When speaking to someone who has just undergone a loss, or change in status, what might be a helpful comment? Why?
- What comments might not be helpful? Why?
- How can friends and family include recently singled people in family or social activities?