

Divrei Hokhmah for 5774

CONVERSATION STARTER 6

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.

My friend Eleanor is a convert OR my friend Eleanor is a Jew-by-choice

Discussion questions

- What is the intent of pointing out that someone converted to Judaism?
- What does tradition say about the treatment of converts? (Answer: we should not remind a convert that once she/he was not a Jew because we were once strangers in Egypt)
- Why do we continue to identify converts?
- How might we respond to someone who uses this label?
- How can we help those who convert to Judaism not feel like outsiders?