



Center for Jewish Ethics

Introduction: Educators' Manual
A Guide to Jewish Practice
Nathan Weiner

“*A Guide to Jewish Practice* is a repository of wisdom and guidance for anyone who is interested in leading a life of integrity, depth, and meaning.”

A Guide to Jewish Practice is an invaluable resource for rabbis and lay educators seeking to engage adults and teens in thoughtful conversation with individual and communal Jewish practice. This Educator's Manual to *A Guide to Jewish Practice* will make the wisdom and guidance accessible and teachable in formats that are simple to navigate.

The existence of all three volumes of *A Guide to Jewish Practice* can boost your adult and teen education programming in meaningful ways, assisting you in helping your students to find their own way and to shape their lives as thinking, contemporary individuals within the context of the richness of Jewish practice and ideas. This Educator's Manual will help you do that.

Rooted in Values-Based Decision Making, this Educator's Manual takes the wisdom contained in the three volumes of *A Guide to Jewish Practice* and brings it to life with simple-to-use lesson plans. The diversity of usages for the *Guide* as a teaching tool is limited only by the educator's imagination. The Educator's Manual further seeks to anticipate some common usages, inspire others, and serve as an invaluable tool in your arsenal for linking the community you serve and teach with a living, vibrant, and contemporary Judaism.

Educators will find lesson plans bundled strategically no matter their anticipated objectives. Potential uses range from using one lesson on a single topic for adult education, developing communal standards of practice, designing a course of study on a particular topic, creating a post B'nai Mitzvah educational program, or any of the multiple topics that your teachings will need to focus on.

Each 45-minute lesson plan contains:

Essential Question: A primary question that reflects the main idea of the lesson

Objectives: The primary outcomes that participants will achieve by the end of the lesson

Set Induction: Ways to energize your participants for the lesson and the activities to come

Exploring the Text: A step-by-step guide for presenting the lesson with a variety of activities, including numerous experiential learning activities

Wrap-Up A brief activity to review and tie the main themes of the lesson together.

This work opens with a primer on **Values-Based Decision Making**. It provides three lesson plans introducing participants to the methodology of *A Guide to Jewish Practice*. These primer lessons are not required for use in preparation for facilitating classes or workshops utilizing the *Guide*. They can function as a stand-alone series for understanding Reconstructionist process or as an introduction to a series utilizing the *Guide*, or pieces of the lessons can be taken to inform your teaching.

LESSON PLANNING

This Educator's Manual provides lesson plans for an ever increasing number of sections of *A Guide to Jewish Practice*. Educators are encouraged not to feel limited to the lesson plans provided, but rather to use their format as inspiration for creating new lesson plans on sections not covered. For a basic primer on effective lesson planning, visit this site: http://www.crlt.umich.edu/gsis/p2_5. We encourage you to submit your lesson plan to our bank of lesson plans on *A Guide to Jewish Practice*; please email Rabbi David Teutsch at dteutsch@rrc.edu.

METHODS

The lesson plans in the Educator's Manual provide a basic framework for teaching the material contained in the volumes of *A Guide to Jewish Practice*. They are not comprehensive. Educators are encouraged to expand upon the lessons. Below are some options for adding depth and diversity to the lessons.

1. TED Talks

TED (Technology, Entertainment, and Design) talks present short lectures (18 minutes or less) on interesting and diverse topics. Either directly or indirectly, TED talks can address issues relevant to your lesson. To find TED talk videos, visit www.ted.com and search your topic.

2. Case Studies

Case studies add a personal touch to discussions of *A Guide to Jewish Practice*. For some lesson plans, case studies are provided. For others, relevant case studies are often easily found by searching the internet. Educators are also encouraged to flex their creative muscles to generate new case studies that reflect issues that arise from the text.

3. Stories

Storytelling and the effective use of stories can deeply enrich your lessons. Personal stories, storytelling anthologies, and Chasidic tales bring to life the material of *A Guide to Jewish Practice*. For a list of relevant stories, visit http://jewishlibraries.org/content.php?page=Jewish_Values_Finder.

4. Music

Popular and religious music is a fun way to add diversity and depth to your lessons. Music addresses many topics, and educators are encouraged to use their music or music videos when appropriate to introduce or expand upon a topic.

USING THE SOURCE TEXTS

Each lesson concludes with a list of primary source texts relevant to the lesson. The texts can be used to deepen understanding of a particular topic, through the lens of Jewish history. There are infinite ways that they can be utilized. A few of them include:

- Break students into pairs (*hevrutot*) and assigning each *hevruta* a text. Ask each *hevruta* to explore its relevance to the topic, and to explain it to the class.
- Print each text on a piece of paper, and place each text on the floor or the walls, in a large circle. Invite participants to walk around reading the texts, and choose their favorite. Then ask participants to discuss why they chose their text.
- Play a game in which you offer to distribute a silly prize for anyone who incorporates one of the texts into their discussion comments.
- Be your own source and use your personal skills and specialties to make the lesson your own.