
**JEWISH YOUTH FOR
COMMUNITY ACTION**

**JYCA'S LEGACY
CURRICULUM, ACTIVITIES,
AND PRINCIPLES**



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Introduction

Jewish Youth for Community Action (JYCA) was founded by Pella Schafer Weisman in 1995 and closed its doors in 2024. Over the years, JYCA received many requests to share curriculum and programming that created such a powerful impact on so many Bay Area Jewish youth activists and leaders. In essence, people wanted us to share the “magic” that made JYCA.

While it is impossible to package the work that was co-created over many years together, we are finally offering a short guide to some of the core elements that made JYCA unique that can be utilized in other youth spaces. In this document we have included:

- The JYCA Legacy Workshops
- Games and Ice-Breakers
- JYCA’s community building agreements
- Tips for working with young people for adult allies

If you use any of these resources, we’d love to know how JYCA’s legacy lives on! Email talia.cooper@gmail.com to share or if you have questions.

JYCA’s Mission

“JYCA is a Jewish program created and led by youth to work towards progressive social change. We seek to educate, empower, and inspire political, social, and cultural awareness in young Jewish activists. By building a community based on trust, respect, and cooperative processes, we create a safe environment for examining ourselves, and world issues through Jewish perspectives.”

-written by JYCA participants, June 1998

Youth Empowerment and Youth-Led Model

JYCA was a youth-led organization in which youth were involved in all aspects of organizational operations including: program planning, facilitation, fundraising, recruitment, board management, and marketing. At JYCA, we aimed to utilize the capabilities of young people by giving them real responsibilities that varied anywhere from cooking dinner on retreats to leading workshops to coordinating fundraisers and making strategic organizational decisions. While we honor the strengths and intelligence young people possess, we also believe that providing youth with meaningful education and training is an important part of youth empowerment. **We did not simply hand over all the operations to youth participants, but rather aimed to set youth up for success through mentorship and training.** The JYCA board always had several youth participants, and so all our Board members went through an adultism training to learn how to work respectfully with youth.



We also believe that in a world that objectifies, manipulates, oppresses and commodifies youth, an important part of youth empowerment involves caring deeply for the authentic emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing of young people. JYCA offered this through regular emotional check-ins, social and emotional learning, and supporting the development of healthy, meaningful relationships between youth and across generations with staff.

The JYCA Legacy Workshops

There are a lot of great resources available for doing oppression and liberation education. These 5 Legacy workshops were developed over 25+ years, revised over and over again, but remained relevant through turbulent and changing times. Over the years, we realized the importance of these workshops is that we started with building a strong foundation of connection, radical love, and creating safety for teenagers to get to be themselves before diving into other necessary challenging work. The Legacy Workshops include:

1. The Heart Exercise: Root Causes of Harm
2. Adultism and Youth Empowerment
3. Active Listening Skills
4. Coolness and Social Hierarchies
5. The Tikkun Olam discussion

We started with topics that centered the lives and experiences of young people. This enabled our youth participants to build a sense of unity with each other. From there we moved deeper into talking about race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. In order to face important differences around identity, oppression, and privilege in mixed groups, especially with young people, it became clear how essential this foundation was for connection and belonging. **We see these five workshops as the glue that enabled JYCA youth to love themselves, each other, and want to engage with justice and liberation work more fully.** Additionally, we believe these five core trainings fill a void in the youth organizing community. There are so many other great workshops we led, created, borrowed, over the years but we chose not to distribute them because there are plenty of more updated resources available for youth learning about other oppressions such as racism, classism, gender oppression, and anti-semitism

NOTE: These trainings were designed for Jewish youth in mind, but can be adapted and applied to participants who are not Jewish or not young. These workshops were often led by a mix of youth and adults together. The 5th mini-workshop specifically engages with a Jewish teaching called *Tikkun Olam*.



WORKSHOP #1



THE HEART EXERCISE: ROOT CAUSES OF HARM

PURPOSE:

Examine the root causes of violence and harm in service of creating peace

OUTCOMES:

- Help build an understanding of how to create human connection
- Create an on-ramp for future discussions of systemic oppression
- Practice self-reflection

MATERIALS:

- Butcher paper or white board
- 4 different color markers
- Optional: slide or print outs or poster of the MLK and Myles Horton quotes

Estimated time: 1 hour

The Heart Exercise:

Root Causes of Harm

Note to Facilitators: [See a quick video example of the Heart Exercise here](#)

Time	Content
5 min	Intro We are going to be doing an activity called the heart exercise to introduce some core beliefs about humanity, how to connect better as humans, and create more peace. Our goals for this activity are: • Explore what violence is and how violence can impact us, our relationships, and our actions. • Better understand how to be more effective activists and compassionate people.
10 min	Opening Discussion Read Quote: “Violence is anything that denies human integrity and leads to hopelessness and helplessness” – Martin Luther King Jr. Dyad: • What does this quote mean to you? How does this expand the typical understanding of violence? (4 mins) Group Share back Facilitator shares: • Violence is what creates oppression– such as adultism, racism, gender oppression etc.– and is at the root of all the systems that harm humans. Some people believe that to be an effective activist and human, you need to look at how violence plays out within you, and how you as an individual have been hurt and then hurt others <i>Note: This workshop will focus on individual violence. We recommend you connect this to systemic violence in future workshops</i>

1 min	Transition to Heart Activity: • So– If we want a peaceful world free from violence, we have to examine how it is that people come to act out harm. • Let’s examine: Where does violence and harm come from? How is it that people are capable of committing injustice?
5 min	The Heart Visual: (see a quick video example of the visual) • Draw a large heart on a poster or white board. • Say: “This heart represents a baby” • Ask: “What are some words or qualities that describe babies?” • Start by giving an example like “curious” or “connected” - o <i>Write those words in the heart</i> • Invite everyone to add a word. - o <i>Capture each word inside the heart</i> <i>(NOTE: if someone suggests “rude” or “selfish,” ask questions to learn what they mean by this to help get at the neutral core, such as “dependent.”)</i>
5 min	The Scars/Hurts: • Adults are regular humans who make mistakes, especially when they are tired or stressed, and we live in a culture that doesn’t always think well about young people. • Ask: “What are some common things adults say that hurt children?” • Start by giving an example like “Shut up” “Grow up” “You’re just a kid” • Invite everyone to add a phrase - o <i>The facilitator should say back what is said without writing down the words. Instead, for every negative remark that is said, make a slash across the heart to represent the hurt</i> - o <i>Note: don’t cross off specific words. This is confusing--just put slashes in various places on the heart. Use a new color pen.</i> <i>Optional: prompt with more specific questions:</i> • What gets said to girl children? • What gets said to boy children? • What gets said to children who act out in school? • <i>Facilitators might also note that sometimes this comes from parents, sometimes from teachers, doctors, cops, and other authority figures. Sometimes these messages come from the broader society and culture, not individuals</i>

5 min	The Shields • This is something that many humans experience, and continue to experience. How does a person cope with so many hurts from their past? • We put up shields. • Ask: What kinds of shields protect us from these hurts? These are often called defense mechanisms. . • Start by giving an example like <i>being sarcastic</i> or <i>playing it cool</i>. ◦ <i>Circle the heart a few times to represent the different shields</i> ◦ <i>If people are struggling, here are some more examples: Not listening/ignoring, being distant, laughing it off, belittling, dismissing ones or others problems, teasing, humiliating, gossip, bullying, physical violence, shyness, people pleasing, overly compliant</i> • For many of us, these shields are life saving, but they can also get in the way of connection.
5 min	Bringin' it Home • Many of us were hurt and developed shields as a consequence—we were hurt in different ways at different times. Some have more shields than others, but the shields prevent us from connecting to others as our most real and vulnerable selves. We walk around bumping up against peoples' shields, rather than interacting and connecting to our hearts. (Draw another heart next to the old one. Give it slashes and shields.) • When one person is trying to communicate with another, they not only have to work through all of their shields to say it, but then the other person has to work through all of their own shields to hear it. • The heart just wants to go in a straight line from one to the next (<i>draw straight line from one heart to the other</i>) • But instead it goes like this (<i>draw wiggly line through the shields</i>) • No wonder it's hard to openly love everyone, communicate well and be vulnerable • No wonder there is so much violence.
10 min	Journal and/or Dyad: How does this feel similar or different from what you experienced as a kid? Are there shields you have put up to protect yourself? Is there a shield you'd like to soften or remove? What helps you connect with others or yourself?

10-15
min

Closing Group Discussion:

- Does anyone want to share some of your hurts or shields?
- How did it feel to think about this?
- What will help us be more full-hearted in our group?

Wrap up:

- Interpersonal violence comes from the places we've been hurt and then act out harm to others
- It is important as activists that we stay aware of this within ourselves
- We can counteract these harmful patterns by learning how to tap into our innate appreciation and love for each other.
- Self-awareness and love are key to organizing and activism
- We started with this exercise because we think it's super essential as we dive deeper into our social justice work together.
- As noted before, this workshop did not get into systemic violence, but it is connected.

Closing Quote

We'll end with a quote from Myles Horton, who was an American educator, socialist and cofounder of the Highlander Folk School, famous for its role in the Civil Rights Movement.

"I think if I had to put a finger on what I consider a good education, a good radical education, it wouldn't be anything about methods or techniques. It would be loving people first...You can't be a revolutionary, you can't want to change society if you don't love people, there's no point in it."

- Myles Horton

Closing go around:

What's one thing you want to remember from this workshop?

WORKSHOP #2



ADULTISM AND YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

PURPOSE:

To understand the oppression and liberation of youth

OUTCOMES:

- Develop an awareness and understanding of adultism, its impact on our lives, and broader function in society
- Consider how adultism plays out in our relationships and institutions
- Create a model for how adults can be allies to youth and effectively work together
- Examine how youth activism is an excellent way to actualize youth empowerment

MATERIALS:

- Handouts (included below)
- Optional: slides of definitions, visual meme, tips, etc

Estimated time: 90 minutes



Adultism & Youth Empowerment

Time	Content
1 min	Workshop Intro • We're going to spend some time today talking about youth empowerment and "adultism" which is a system of oppression that targets young people. • Notes: ◦ Adultism is so deeply normalized and less recognized, such that it can be hard to see so that's what we're doing today. ◦ This speaks to the experience of young people in U.S dominant culture. We recognize that there are many cultural variations for how young people are treated throughout the world
10 min	Step Into the Circle Activity: • Framing: We're going to start off with an activity called "Step Into the Circle" where we'll ask you to step forward in response to a statement that asks you to reflect on moments of disempowerment you might have experienced as youth. This will help us start to build awareness of some of the micro and macro aggressions youth contend with that are too often normalized in our society. • Reminders: This activity may take you out of your comfort zone. <i>No one is obligated to share more than they are ready to share.</i> Anyone is welcome to sit and observe instead. We will be doing the activity silently and will get a chance to debrief in small groups after. • Options: Depending on group needs regarding accessibility or confidentiality. This activity can also be done as: ◦ Everyone in a circle and "step into the circle if..." ◦ Everyone is seated and "raise your hand if..." ◦ Everyone closes their eyes and "claps or snaps if..." <i>Read each statement slowly, loudly, and clearly. Pause after the statement, then say "OK, you can step back now."</i> Step into the circle if: • An adult ever ignored you when you tried to tell them something • You have ever been told you were too young to understand something • Your dress or appearance was ever criticized or overly focused on by an adult

	- You have ever been called stupid or less intelligent because you are not an adult - An adult ever read your journal or phone without your permission - You have ever been lied to by an adult - You were ever yelled at by an adult - You have ever been cheated out of money by an adult - You were ever paid less than an adult for doing equal work - You were ever stopped by the police on the street - You were ever arrested personally or witnessed your peers be made part of the juvenile justice system - You were ever left alone when you didn't want to be - An adult ever chose to leave your life completely when you wanted them to stay - You were ever told "it's just a phase" - An adult was ever surprised by how smart or capable you were - Your opinions were ever discounted as too childish or naïve - You were ever told that being young is the best time of your life - You were ever told that life and the "real world" doesn't really start until after high school - You were ever told not to cry or that crying is a sign of weakness Facilitator: - Thank you all for engaging with this activity. - Notice how you are feeling, and where any feelings might be coming up in your body. - Let's all take a couple collective deep breaths or shake it off before we sit back down.
10 min	Small Group Debrief Directions: We're going to take some time to debrief that activity in small groups of 3 or 4 people Prompts: - What most impacted you or surprised you about the step into the circle activity? - What feelings came up for you? <i>Note that if this is a group with adults and youth, have adults and youth in their own separate debrief groups</i>
10 min	Defining Adulthood We use the term "adulthood" to describe the systemic disempowerment of youth

	● Who's heard of adultism? <i>Raise of hands.</i> ● Adultism is a form of oppression that often flies below the radar because it is so normalized and because youth rights are so often disrespected and disregarded. ● We're going to read JYCA's definition of adultism and discuss it together. Can someone read it aloud for us? Definition: Adultism is the everyday, systematic, and institutionalized oppression that young people face at the hands of adults. It is the training ground for conditioning people to live in and accept a society based on exploitation, violence and hierarchies of race, class, gender and other identities. Adultism is the comprehensive process our society uses to teach babies and young children that because they are still growing this makes them less human and inferior to adults. Some more details on this definition: ● Adultism plays out between individuals and is also part of the structure of society and its institutions (notably in schools) ● Adultism is unique in that essentially all people experience adultism and eventually become the agents of this oppression in adulthood ● Many of us internalize adultism. This shapes how we treat younger people as we age ● Adultism is distinguished from ageism, which is prejudice on the grounds of age; not specifically against youth ● Adultism affects all youth, but because of intersecting oppressions not all youth experience adultism in the same way In Dyads: Discuss the definition ● What do you think of this definition? ○ What parts do you resonate with? ○ What parts do you have trouble with? ○ How have you experienced adultism in your own life? ○ What variations do you notice in your family or in your culture? Group share out ● What thoughts or questions are coming up? ● What do you think the impact of adultism is on you personally?
10 min	The Function of Adultism in Our Society - The Training Ground Opening: All oppressions are terrible and unjustifiable, AND they exist for a reason

	- For example, White Supremacy exists to justify slavery, colonization, and the exploitation of labor Transition: So what function does Adultism specifically serve? - To condition all people to accept hierarchy and powerlessness and normalize violence and harm Adultism teaches many young people that the way to survive in the world is to put up shields of protection around their loving, curious, and connected selves and, in self-defense, to pass on their pain and anger in abuse towards other people or towards themselves. <i>(Note: if you have done the Heart Exercise - refer back)</i> Stepping outside yourself for a moment, let's just imagine a young person: What do you think the impact would be if this young person repeatedly heard messages that their feelings and opinions don't matter, that they don't know enough to contribute anything, that they are too weak and/or dumb to be valuable... Discuss: What would the immediate and long term impacts be on this young person? Optional questions/points to add in: - How does this impact young people's ability to be in relationship with each other? - This process trains young people to think of themselves as separate, isolated, and in competition with others to prove their worthiness, wholeness, etc. Wrap up: Adultism is a training ground. Because we experience such deep powerlessness as young people, we're conditioned to accept other forms of oppression as normal.
10 min	Optional: The Institutions of Adultism Adultism plays out on an interpersonal level (person to person) but it is perpetuated by institutions, such as the education system. Group discussion (this can also be done as breakouts, which each small group taking one of the systems): - How do you think the education system enforces adultism? <i>Example: youth have little to no choice in what they get to learn</i> - How do you think the government enforces adultism? <i>Example: youth pay taxes on all purchases and do not get to vote</i> - How do you think the medical system enforces adultism? <i>Example: youth are sometimes medicated without their input often in an attempt to help them conform</i>

	- How do you think the economic system/Capitalism enforces adultism? <i>Example: youth are specifically targeted by corporations as consumers</i> - Are there any other systems that you see intersecting with adultism? - How do our different identities impact how we experience adultism (for example, youth of color, queer youth etc..)
10 min	Optional: Youth activism Youth have been trained to be powerless, but our inherent nature is to work towards fairness. Small group: Check out page 1-2 of the handout and visual (see below) Discuss: How does this resonate with you (or not)? What do you think youth empowerment means?
15 min	Youth Empowerment - Share back- what did your group think about what youth empowerment means? Definition of youth empowerment Youth gaining information, ability, agency, and decision making skills to implement change in their own lives and the lives of others Note: - The opposite of adultism is not treating youth as adults, but rather youth empowerment. One of the ways that adultism plays out is when adults ask youth to be responsible for things they shouldn't be responsible for - Youth should get to experience being young, trying things and making mistakes, learning and developing at their own pace, and not having to take on more responsibility than they are ready for Discuss: - Have you seen or experienced any examples of youth empowerment? - What do you think youth empowerment looks like with a baby? A kid? A teenager? - For example: - Babies: asking babies for consent: "Can I pick you up?" and sharing information about what is happening and why - Toddlers: giving choices "Do you want to wear this or that?" - Kids and teens: giving age-appropriate opportunities to share opinions and effect change in their families, schools and communities

	Optional Snowball Activity • Hand out paper and pens to everyone • Ask: What is something you love about being a young person? Or what do you love about young people? - o Write this on a note, crumple it up, throw it in the center of the circle - o Everyone pick a crumpled snowball out of the pile to read aloud
	Optional: Adult Allyship: Youth and Adults Effectively Working Together Adults have a very important role to play in young people's lives and we encourage everyone to develop multi-generational relationships. Understanding adulthood doesn't mean youth should not be connected to adults, or that adults should leave youth alone. Everyone benefits when youth and adults can work together effectively. Dyad: Who is an adult who has made a big difference in your life? What did they do and how did it make you feel? Share out: Ask for a few participants to share their personal examples If adults are participating in this workshop, consider using the JYCA tips for being allies to young people at the bottom of the handouts. Another great resource: Roger Hart's Ladder of Engagement https://organizingengagement.org/models/ladder-of-childrens-participation/
5 min	Bringin it Home Closing Go-Around • What is one thing you're taking away from this workshop? • OR what's something you appreciate about yourself and how you've been/were resilient as a young person?



Handouts for the Adulthood Workshop

Definition of Adulthood

Adulthood is the everyday, systematic, and institutionalized oppression that young people face at the hands of adults. It is the training ground for conditioning people to live in and accept a society based on exploitation, violence and hierarchies of race, class, gender and other identities.

Adulthood is the comprehensive process our society uses to teach babies and young children that because they are still growing they are less human and inferior to adults.

What is the connection between activism and adulthood?

At Jewish Youth for Community Action (JYCA) we often talked about how young people really do want justice in the world. As little kids we see that some people have less than us and some people have more than us and we think *Not fair!* We hear about violence and wars on TV and radio and we think *Not okay!* Or we experience violence and abuses in our lives and neighborhoods and we cry and try to seek out help. We really believe that things should and can be fixed for a more just world.

We see that some of the adults around us don't seem to care as much about it. We're told to stop crying, no one comes when we cry and we start to feel alone, we're told we're being childish & naïve, idealistic and unrealistic, we get scared that people will see us as crazy if we cry or scream for every injustice, we're told adults know better and we'll understand when we're older so we think we must be wrong for seeing injustice everywhere, we're told "life's not fair."

And then....what happens? It all starts to feel overwhelming. Many of us start to become numb to these feelings, or like we don't know where to begin. We might not know how to start, so we don't.

We start to think that really believing in a better world is a childish unrealistic thing. We call people of all ages 'childish' for believing in a more just system. At our best we put all of our hope on the next generation to fix it.

So adulthood impacts our capacities to make change in the world. That's why fighting it means validating that injustice exists, and knowing and lifting up that youth have the power to make a difference. Thus, youth empowerment is the antidote to adulthood.

Definition of Youth Empowerment

Youth gaining information, ability, agency, and decision making skills to implement change in their own lives and the lives of others

Youth Empowerment Visual Scale

I hate kids	
Nothing personal, I just don't really like being around kids	
it's weird that we normalize hating and generalizing children when they are LITERALLY people each with their own personality and needs	
Kids and their caretakers are oppressed and marginalized - truly equitable and accessible organizing spaces will accommodate their needs by providing childcare	
Children's innate tendency to question the status quo as well as their ability to imagine an ideal world without limits makes their active engagement in organizing efforts an invaluable resource as we move together towards ultimate liberation for all	
KIDS ARE THE ULTIMATE COMRADES	



Being an Ally to Young People

Recognize that just being an adult can be intimidating

The simple fact that you are an adult means you hold special privileges and power in our society. To be a good ally, you need to recognize the power difference between your group and the one you want to help. Since adults often have the upper hand, it is important to know when to just listen, when to trust the wisdom and judgment of youth, etc.

Challenge Adulthood

Practice being an ally even if you are not in the presence of young people. Talk about adulthood with other adults. When you see the negative stereotyping of youth in action, take a stand against it. Thinking and acting with respect to young people at all times will carry over in your ability to support and relate to the youth in your life.

Remember your younger years

Often we don't want to remember our teen years or can glamorize or downplay the difficulties we went through. When supporting young people, it can be really powerful to remember and share the challenges, joys, concerns, and interests you had at their age.

Be a committed part of young peoples' lives

Earn the trust and friendship of young people by being a stable and constant part of their lives. (Don't just take on a supervisor or parent role, try to approach as a friend)

Remind youth of their importance

Help young people remember that their involvement is both important and achievable. Because they are dismissed so frequently, they sometimes forget just how much they know. It helps to just point out young peoples' successes.

Hold high expectations of young people

Expect the young people you work with to have respect for themselves and one another. Expect that they have good ideas to contribute. Also be realistic, and expect that they know their limitations. Respect the boundaries they draw.

Help youth support one another

Sometimes the best support a young person can have is from another young person, but they don't always know this. Because often young people have learned to distrust themselves they also sometimes learn to distrust their peers or judge them negatively.

Be a guide not a boss

When working with young people adults tend to run to polar extremes. They either try to control everything or they become too permissive, leaving every decision to young people. It's a balancing act. Strive to guide young people, without taking control.

Be careful not to be condescending

Even when you are meaning to praise or congratulate young people on their successes, be conscious of not being patronizing and/or belittling.

Become involved in social justice movements!

Don't put all the pressure on the next generation to solve the world's problems, but do support and follow youth activism and leadership.

WORKSHOP #3



ACTIVE LISTENING

Purpose: To understand, learn, and practice active listening as a tool for healing and liberation

Outcomes:

- Identify common listening blocks we may have experienced
- Understand why active listening is an important skill connected to healing and liberation
- Learn and practice skills and tools of active listening
- Build and deepen trust with each other
- Learn your personal preferences about how you like to be listened to

Materials:

- Poster paper or slides with listening blocks and skills
- Post-its with prompts written on them (see below)
- Butcher paper or white board for capturing other thoughts
- Music to play for the game
- Timer for the dyads

Estimated time: 75 minutes



Active Listening Workshop

<u>Time</u>	<u>Content</u>
2 min	Introduction • Today we're talking about active listening, which is an important part of youth empowerment • Active listening contributes to Tikkun Olam, the Jewish concept of healing of the world because good listening can help people feel whole again
10 min	Active Listening Game Directions: • Everyone is going to get a post-it to put on your forehead. Do NOT look at what the post-it says. Once everyone has one, we'll ask you to get up, walk around, and when the music stops you'll pair up with someone and try to have a conversation with them. You can choose one of the following prompts for this activity (or something else of your choosing): ◦ How do you feel about your birthday? ◦ Where can you get the best pizza in your city, and why is it the best? • You also have to follow the instructions written on the post-it of the person you're talking with. We'll let you know when to switch, then we'll walk around a few more times, having new conversations with more people the same way. • Any questions? • Facilitator places post-it on each person's forehead • <i>DON'T SAY THIS OUT LOUD! Post-its have the following written on them:</i> ◦ "Ignore me" ◦ "Look at your phone while I talk" ◦ "Agree with everything I say" ◦ "Keep changing the subject" ◦ "Make the conversation about you" ◦ "Zone out while I'm talking with you" ◦ "Laugh at everything I say" ◦ "Ask too many questions" ◦ "Give me advice that I didn't ask for" ◦ "Tell me what I'm talking about doesn't matter/ isn't a big deal/small potatoes" ◦ "Compete with me: 'That's nothing compared to what happened to me!'" ◦ "Gasp and say you can't imagine what I'm going through"

	Group Debrief ● Share back: How did that feel? What did you notice? What do you think was the point of that game? ● Recap: Obviously this was exaggerated, but these are all things that happen during conversations.
15 min	Common Listening Blocks We've broken it down into 6 common listening blocks (share poster or slide): Ask for a volunteer to read each one: 1. Competitive Listening: "that's nothing compared to what happened to me..." Always trying to one up the person with your own experiences, this dismisses their experience 2. Advising: Trying to give advice and solve all the other persons problems rather than just listening 3. Dreaming: Getting lost in your own thoughts, thinking of other things that are going on in your day or thinking of things that the other person's stories make you think of, but not actually listening to them 4. Devil's Advocate: always bent on disagreeing, insisting on presenting the other point of view, playing devil's advocate just for the hell of it 5. Derailing: changing the subject when someone is talking about something unpleasant or difficult, not sitting with them and letting them feel what is going on but trying to distract and steer the conversation away 6. Judging: Interpreting the person's situation with your own morals and ethics and offering your judgments of the situation Discuss: ● Which ones have you experienced? ● Which ones have you done? ● What can happen when we are not listened to well? ● How can that cause harm? Instead of listening blocks, we want to practice active listening because: ● It helps build trust and closeness with individuals and groups ● It's central to youth empowerment work because we want youth voices to be heard and taken seriously

	• It's an important tool for healing - when we share our experiences with others and are met with understanding and empathy it helps us to let go of stress and think clearly again • It's an important tool for activism and community organizing: to be able to really listen to people and understand their stories and experiences helps us to better identify problems and solutions Group Share: Can anyone think of someone who listens to them well? What's that like? When you're listened to really well: what does that make possible? Brainstorm: <i>(capture thoughts on paper)</i> • How do you feel- emotionally and physically- when you've been listened to well? examples: - o Affirmed - o Connected - o Relieved - o Held • So what helps you personally feel listened to? <i>Examples:</i> - o Eye contact - o Repeating back what we said to clarify - o Nodding <i>Note: some people need different things to feel well-listened to! Some people like a lot of eye contact and some people like less. It's our job to learn how to best listen to the people in our lives.</i> Wrap Up: Being an active listener is a skill! It's something you can learn. It's OK if we're not good at it right away - it takes time and practice to become a more active listener. And we're going to practice that skill today.
2 min	About Dyads • We're about to do a series of dyads! • A dyad is one person sharing and the other person listening. It is not a conversation where there is back and forth dialogue. In a dyad, each person gets an equal amount of time to be listened to. • JYCA's founder Pella Schafer Weisman wanted dyads to be a part of the organization because she recognized that young people have so few spaces where they really get to just experience solid listening. • In your dyad, if you run out of things to say and still have time, it's okay to practice sitting in silence too, even if it feels weird.

30
min

Active Listening Skills

Directions:

- We're going to do a series of short dyads designed to help you practice different listening skills. For each round of dyads, you will get a chance to speak uninterrupted for 1 minute, and then listen for 1 minute.
- Part of your goal for yourself in these dyads is to learn: how do I like to be listened to?
- And then when interacting with others your goal is to learn: how do they like to be listened to?
- **Note:** Facilitator should set a timer, and call out when it's time to switch

Skill 1: Eye contact

Explain: People like different amounts of eye contact. We're going to try 3 levels of eye contact so you can notice what you like. Pay attention to what feelings come up in each one.

1st Dyad- Back-to-back: Sit back to back not looking at each other.

- **Prompt:** Tell us about your childhood monster, favorite stuffed animal, or imaginary friend. *(1 min each)*

2nd Dyad- Sit side by side. You can look at each other periodically.

- **Prompt:** "What would be a perfect day for you?" *(1 min each)*

3rd Dyad- Facing each other: Sit facing each other and try to maintain eye contact the whole time.

- **Prompt:** "What is your family like? Do you have any family traditions?" *(1 min each)*

Group debrief

Does anyone want to share what that was like for them?

There's no "correct" amount of eye contact since it varies culture by culture and person to person.

Skill 2 and 3: Listening for *facts* and for *feelings*

The next two dyads will be about listening for the facts of what they're sharing and then listening for the feelings behind what they're saying. When we do this, we get a chance to share back what we heard. The key to this is humility- we might not get it right, and that's okay!

When we listen like this we want to share back "I heard _____. Is that right?"

and then give the speaker a chance to say yes or no. Even if you're wrong, it's great because it gives them a chance to further clarify and deepen both of your understandings.

Skill 2: Listening for facts

- You can sit however you want and don't worry about the amount of eye contact.
- For this dyad we're focused on listening for the information and facts (*not feelings*). The speaker will share for 1 min and then the listener will share back the facts. After sharing back, ask: "Did I get that right?" Give them a chance to respond.
 - **Prompt:** Share a memory about a time when you sang really loud or laughed really hard (*1 min each*)

****Note to Facilitator:** After you call time, remind the listener to check in with their partner and ask "I heard_____Is that right?"

Skill 3: Listening for feelings

- This dyad is focused on listening for the feelings (*not the facts*). Some people share their feelings and needs openly, and some people share them more subtly. The speaker will share for 1 minute and then the listener will say, "It sounds like you're feeling___, is that right?" "I wonder if you're needing___, is that true?"
- Example: it sounds like you're feeling sad, is that right?
- Note: that a feeling is not a thought or a judgement. So you wouldn't say "It sounds like you're feeling like that person shouldn't have done that." That's a thought, not a feeling. A feeling is an emotion word.
 - **Prompt:** What's something you keep thinking about this week? (*1 min each*)

****Note to Facilitator:** After you call time, remind the listener to check in with their partner and ask "It sounds like you're feeling _____Is that right?"

Skill 4: Curiosity

- Another way to actively listen is to show your curiosity by asking questions! Curious questions are open-ended: "how do you feel about that? Or "What's important to you about that?" They're not yes or no questions. Does anyone want to give another example of a curious question?
- Dyad for 1 minute and then listener asks a few curious questions
 - **Prompt:** "What's your favorite Jewish holiday and why?" (*1 min each*)

	Debrief: Does anyone want to share what that was like? Wrap Up: • Today we talked about 6 listening blocks and 4 listening skills. ◦ BLOCKS: 1) Competitive Listening 2) Advising 3) Dreaming 4) Devil's Advocate, 5) Derailing, 6) Judging ◦ SKILLS: 1) Finding the right amount of eye contact for each person 2) Listening for facts 3) Listening for feelings 4) Expressing curiosity • These are not the only ones! • <i>Point to the posters showing all the blocks and skills.</i> • Today we practiced these one at a time, but in conversation you can try out doing all of them. And if that feels overwhelming, you can still just focus on one to practice.
5 min	Bringin' it Home Journal or dyad: What did you learn about how you personally like to be listened to? What listening skills do you want to focus on practicing this week? <i>Short debrief in group if you have extra time</i> • What clues might you get about how someone likes to be listened to? • What do we have to gain by listening to others well? • How do you think active listening contributes to liberation and healing? To Tikkun Olam? Tikkun olam is about repairing the shattered pieces of the world. We enable repair with our great listening.
5 min	Closing • Go around: what did you appreciate about today's workshop OR sharing which skill you want to practice this week

WORKSHOP #4



COOLNESS & SOCIAL HIERARCHIES WORKSHOP

Purpose:

To understand how we've been impacted by social pressures to conform under capitalism to be perceived as "cool"

Outcomes:

- Get more closely connected to each other
- Create an inclusive group culture based on human connection instead of social hierarchy
- Learn about the intersections of coolness, capitalism, white supremacy, assimilation and antisemitism

Materials:

- Paper and pens
- Butcher paper or white board with the outline of a large blank body
- Markers
- Printouts of the journal prompts
- Printouts or slides
 - What is Capitalism? Handout
 - The Amara Small quote
 - Dyad questions
- Art project supplies (if doing)
 - Large canvas (enough for there to be 1 canvas for 4 people)
 - Paint
 - Paintbrushes
 - Cleaning supplies



Coolness & Social Hierarchies

Time	Content
10 min	Introduction to Coolness Workshop • Today we're going to talk about the concept of "coolness." We want to explore where the idea of "coolness" comes from, how it relates to Capitalism, and how it impacts us and our group. • Feel free to speak from your own experiences of "being cool" or "not being cool," and let us all remember that we are all equally fabulous. • This is incredibly embarrassing stuff to talk about. • Those of us who have been deemed cool might be totally embarrassed to admit that, and those of us who have not been deemed cool might be totally embarrassed to admit that as well. • But these labels don't actually mean anything about you. • Can we all agree not to judge each other for being cool or not cool? • Show thumbs up if you can agree
10 min	Defining Coolness: • Solo journaling or drawing: What are the unspoken social rules in your circle(s)? For example- what types of clothes are you supposed to wear to fit in? What types of photos are you supposed to post? <i>Journal or draw on your own paper.</i> • Come back to the big group • Group discussion to define: What makes someone "cool?" ◦ Write all the qualities, characteristics that define coolness such as clothes, music, attitudes/ideologies, hobbies, hairstyles, etc ■ Examples: In some circles it's cool to wear thrift, and in others to wear designer clothing (depending on race, class, gender, etc). ■ Note: <i>we're saying this to air out the unspoken rules of being "cool," not to encourage people to adopt them</i> ■ Note: <i>some things might be contradictory which is ok! Some will be specific to a certain gender, class, race, etc-- feel free to name anything that's cool in your group(s)</i> • Debrief questions: ◦ When you look at this poster- what do you feel? ◦ What are the privileges of being cool? ◦ What are the challenges of being cool?

3-5min	Important Framing: • Coolness is completely socially constructed and always changing! There is nothing inherently cool about looking or acting in these ways, but these are the messages we are bombarded with whether or not we agree with them. • We all have different experiences with coolness. • "Coolness" creates a social hierarchy, or often what we think about in terms of "popularity" - where some people are seen and treated as more valuable than other people. • It's not that people who try to be cool are bad because it's normal/biological to want to fit in- but the challenge is when it creates a system of social hierarchy with dynamics of exclusion, insecurity, and pain • This pain and fear of exclusion is what fuels consumerism and capitalism • People who have been identified as cool are often granted some social privileges, and that's important to note, but that doesn't mean that life is better for cool people either - there can be a certain pressure to stay cool and hide parts of yourself you feel aren't cool to keep your place at the top of the hierarchy and benefit from those social privileges
(15-20 min)	Coolness Experiences • Intro: Now we're going to get into our experiences of coolness. We hope these conversations offer you the opportunity to share & hear what others are going through in a real way. • Journal prompts or solo reflection prompts: ○ When was a time that you felt distinctly not cool or a time when you felt pressure to be cool. What was that like for you? ○ Are there people in your life who seem to not care about being cool, or embrace being different? What are they like? ○ Was there something you loved doing as a kid but gave up because you didn't think it was "cool" anymore? ○ If you were not worried about coolness, what would you do? What would you try? • Debrief in groups of 3: ○ Pick one of the prompts that resonated with you and take turns sharing • Wrap up: Thanks everyone for sharing so openly! Talking about coolness can be difficult and vulnerable, but by doing so, we start to recognize the patterns of othering and idealizing that get in the way of building a supportive, inclusive community.

15 min	Capitalism and Coolness Now we're going to look at the intersections of capitalism and coolness. Get in pairs and read the handout and discuss (<i>see below for the handout</i>) Come back to the group: • Does anyone want to share any questions or reflections? <i>Recommend short stretch or energizer here</i>
25-30 min	White Supremacy and Assimilation • Coolness is steeped in a long history of white supremacy • Coolness in U.S dominant culture heavily exploits and commodifies Black culture. There's a deep and complex history of this, worthy of its own workshop. • It can be confusing because it can seem positive that Black culture is seemingly celebrated and embraced as cool, but it erases the fact that it's being exploited and commodified for the profit of white people and white supremacy. Project or pass out this quote, and then read aloud together: <i>"Even though slavery may have ended, Black people are still America's favorite product. The truth is, Blackness is America's biggest import and export... Blackness is many things, but it is not an object. It is powerful, it is fascinating, it is melancholy, it is contradictory, it is resilient, it is (sometimes) self-sabotaging, it is living and complex and growing, but it is not an object...I want people to engage with and appreciate Black culture. It's one of my favorite things in the world, and I think its beauty should be shared. However, I'm not willing to include others at the expense of Black autonomy or credit"</i> - Amara Small in the Michigan Daily. Discussion questions: • Why is the "objectification" of Black culture problematic? • How is it different from celebrating and honoring Black culture? • What are some examples of how Black culture is currently trendy in popular culture? • Who do you think ultimately profits or gains from this? Transition: We are going to think about how we as Jews are affected by White Supremacy - this looks different for all Jews, depending on our ethnic and racial backgrounds. Jews come from many different lineages and so there are Jews of color and multiracial Jews. Some Jews have been able to become "white" and some have not, but all of us have been affected by white supremacy.

Jews and assimilation and coolness

Ask group: Is it cool to be Jewish? How are Jews portrayed in mainstream U.S. culture?

Explain:

- Jews have often been cast as uncool, nerdy, annoying, weird, and especially different - and hated or despised for this (this is a big part of anti-semitism) (Does anyone want to share any examples of this from pop culture?)
- Jews in the U.S. (along with every non Anglo-Protestant group) have had to undergo a process of assimilation to become “American”
- Assimilation is the process a group of people undergo in which they are pressured to reject their cultural or ethnic identity by making themselves similar to white dominant culture (whether or not these groups are accepted as “white”)
- This often means loss of native language, loss of spiritual, cultural, and religious practices, beliefs, traditions, as well as traditional forms of artistic and cultural expression such as music, dance, and crafts.
 - Note: We’re talking primarily about white Ashkenazi Jews here because that’s who is portrayed in mainstream culture. It’s a whole other challenge that U.S. culture erases Jews of Color and non-Ashkenazi Jews. But because this is the mainstream narrative about Jews, this messaging impacts most Jews of all backgrounds.

Dyads (show questions on poster or slide):

- What is your relationship to Jewishness and coolness?
- How comfortable do you feel showing your Jewishness in Jewish spaces vs non-Jewish spaces?
- How have you seen exclusivity and coolness show up in your life or in Jewish community?

5 min

We’re creating a different culture!

We are trying to create a very different culture here - one in which we can be close and show our real and multifaceted selves. Creating another kind of youth culture that is based on trust, love, and mutual respect is political and revolutionary. It is challenging all these divisive and oppressive forces.

Zesty is our proposed alternative to coolness. Instead of saying something or someone is cool, we say they are zesty. This means they are fabulous in their own particular way, and so is everyone else.

Group discussion:

What would our group look like if it was really based on zestiness and the inclusion of everyone?

	Connection Activity Choice: Choose 1-2 of the options provided below. Each one offers a different, creative way to build community within the group after exploring how social constructions of coolness limit our humanity and keep youth divided.
15 min	Option 1: Speed-Relating Game One way we can break down the culture of coolness is by getting to know each other better! So let's do some speed-relating... • Directions: - o We're going to get into two circles - an inner circle and an outer circle. Everyone in the inner circle should be facing someone in the outer circle. - o We'll give the group a question and you'll have a couple minutes to share with your partner. Then we'll rotate to a new person and get a new question to discuss. • Questions: - o What's something zesty about you? - o What's a fandom you are deeply invested in? - o What is something most people like, but you don't? - o If you could sit next to anyone on a park bench, who would you choose? - o If you could pick one attribute from an animal to have, what would it be and why? - o If you could host a podcast about any topic, what would it be? - o What is your go-to corny joke? - o What's something you think everyone should try at least once? - o Who is someone that you really love and why? - o What is one thing we wouldn't know about you just by looking at you?
15 min	Option 2: Tableaus We're going to explore some of our feelings about coolness by working with our bodies. I'll ask you to get into a tableau or a posture that represents how you feel about different things. For example, could someone show me what body position expresses your feelings about a 7am wakeup alarm? So this is just a way for us to keep exploring a topic by getting into our bodies and out of our heads a bit. Start walking around the room.

	• Get into a position in your body that represents how you feel when you don't feel welcome (pause, breathe, keep walking) • Get into a position that represents how you feel when someone teases you (pause, breathe, keep walking) • Get into a position that represents how you feel when you are included (pause, breathe, keep walking) • Get into a position that represents how you feel when you connect with a friend (pause, breathe, keep walking) • Get into a position that represents how you feel when you remember that you are worthy of love (pause, breathe, keep walking) Debrief: What was that like? What did you notice?
20-30 min	Option 3: 4 Corners Art Project B'tzelem Elohim is the Jewish belief that we are all made in the image of G-d. In many ways this concept relates exactly to what we have discussed today, and what we are striving to create in our group together. As a way to celebrate each of our uniqueness - we will do an art project in which you will be in a group of 4 people. <u>Directions:</u> • You will each share a canvas to paint on. • Each of you will start painting from one corner working your way to the center. • You can paint anything- in any style in any color- that speaks to you. You will work individually on your corner and work your way towards the center. • When each of your corner painting designs begin to converge in the center, you will work together to blend or integrate the four individual artistic choices into one cohesive center. • In the end you will have created a painting that includes each of your individual styles and the creative and unique way you found a way to connect as one.
5 min	Bringin' it home • There are so many ways to connect to people around us. Drawing strict lines around who is allowed to be inside a community and who is outside only weakens our collective potential for change. • You are all such zesty people, and the more we recognize what makes each other and ourselves awesome we can bring our pride, energy, and unique skillsets to our communities and social justice endeavors.



Group Discussion:

- What are some ways that we can help each other to not worry so much about coolness within our group?
- What helps you remember that you're *B'tzelem Elohim*—worthy just as you are?

Closing Go Around:

- What's something you want to remember from this workshop?

Strike a Pose!

Everyone stand up in a circle, think of what makes you “zesty” and a pose that would capture that. On the count of 3 we will strike a Zesty Pose! 1...2...3..ZESTY!



Coolness Handout

Capitalism and Consumerism

What is capitalism?

Our current economic system, which started about 500 years ago with the colonization of the Americas, the slave trade, and the industrial revolution.

It is based on making profit through a market based economy, where we produce goods and services **based on demand (what people want)** not on what people need. Because it is *not* based on real needs, it must continuously produce **new wants** in order for people to keep consuming and spending money.

How does this relate to coolness?

- A lot of advertising is based around making people feel inadequate, or uncool, and selling a product as the solution. We might not really “need” the latest phone or fashion trend, but we might feel left out if we don’t have it.
- Oftentimes products are marketed by manipulating people’s emotions. There are many ways to do this, but at the root it often requires people not being happy and comfortable with what they have and who they are.
- One of the most powerful tools to make people feel bad about themselves is to draw on the many systems of oppression. Advertising can use sexism, racism, homophobia, fatphobia, toxic masculinity, ableism, or any other harmful standards to play on people’s insecurities.
- Once people feel insecure, marketing is set up to make people think buying some product is the solution to their problem.
- For example, advertising relies on unrealistic beauty standards to make people feel insecure about their bodies and then sell them beauty products. Instead of changing beauty standards, capitalism has created a multi-billion dollar beauty industry.

And the cycle continues...

- Companies continuously create new needs, and society’s culture continues to be based on the harmful idea that people are not good enough as they are
- Example: Clothing companies need to make people think they constantly need the newest latest style to be happy or accepted, in order to keep selling and making money.

Discussion Prompts:

- Can you think of a product you once really wanted in order to fit in or feel cool? What do you remember about how it was advertised or how it came into your consciousness? What felt compelling about it?
- Any thoughts, questions, feelings, or other examples come up after reading this?



WORKSHOP #5



TIKKUN OLAM

PURPOSE:

To learn about how justice is core concept of Judaism

OUTCOMES:

- Understand the origin of an often discussed phrase in the Jewish social justice world
- Get to share about our own connection and feelings about Judaism
- Understand how justice (tzedek) is a core component of Judaism, and tikkun olam is a concept to return to throughout your social justice work together as a Jewish organization

MATERIALS:

- “The History of Tikkun Olam” Handout
- The dyad questions
- Paper and pens for journaling

Estimated time: 40 minutes

Tikkun Olam

Time	Content
2 min	Intro Tikkun Olam is a concept that gets discussed a lot in Jewish social justice spaces. It is a core part of our beliefs. Let's dig in.
10 min	Read the history of Tikkun Olam– <i>solo, in pairs or as a group (see below for the reading)</i>
5 min	Solo journaling: what does Tikkun Olam mean to you?
10 min	Dyads Questions: - What has Judaism meant to you so far in your life? - What does the story of Tikkun Olam mean to you? - How are you feeling about being Jewish these days?
10 min	<i>Bringin it Home</i> Justice (tzedek) is a core component of Judaism, and Tikkun Olam is a concept to return to throughout our lives as Jews and as activists Go around: what's something you want to remember from our discussion today?



Tikkun Olam Handout

The History of Tikkun Olam

In the generation following the Jews' expulsion from Spain (1492), the Kabbalist Isaac Luria of Tzfat meditated, and came up with a new creation story that would explain the brokenness of the world.

Isaac Luria's creation story:

In the beginning there is nothing but God. God wants to make a world. But where do you put the world when you yourself fill everything? God contracts God's self to create a space within the middle (sort of like a womb) into which God puts the vessels that will contain the elements of creation. God puts into these vessels the divine light to animate all of creation. As it turns out there is no way that these vessels can contain concentrated divine light. And so they shatter the sparks of divine light contained within them.

So it becomes that humans have the task of gathering up all those broken vessels and sparks of divine light and putting them back together. This is what Luria referred to as World Repair, or Tikkun Olam.

What happened to Luria's creation story:

For a long time people forgot about this creation story. Then after the holocaust, traumatized Jews again started to wonder how there could be a world so broken. They started to look at Luria's idea of shattered vessels as a possible explanation.

In the 1970s and 80s people looked at this creation story again and realized that it was a metaphor for social action. People working together to make the world a better place is the in-gathering of the divine sparks. Since then, the term has become a popular way of referring to social action.

It's interesting to note that the term (Tikkun Olam) was first invented after a time of Jewish persecution (Spain) and was then re-popularized again after Jewish persecution (holocaust). The term results from Jews seeking answers to their mistreatment. Many Jews believed that bad things happened to them because they had been bad people. But the Lurianic teachings tell us that we did not deserve the holocaust. Bad things happen because bad things happen in the world (due to shattered vessels). And so it was not our fault, and yet that does not relieve us of responsibility for healing the world.

Lately, Jews have used *Tikkun Olam* to refer to any good deed. But the old teachings say it is more complicated than that. The old Kabbalists say that Tikkun Olam is about thinking and meditating and feeling something so deeply that the act comes not just from doing, but from the feeling and deep thinking that accompany the action.

This is what separates Tikkun Olam from mainstream society's notions of charity, service, civic duty, etc. It is an intentional, spiritual, and emotional process along with action.

Thank you to Rabbi David Cooper for helping to inform this document

GAMES AND ICE BREAKERS

We've included our list of games and ice breakers that we played over the years. Most of these are not JYCA originals, but many of them became JYCA traditions. We strongly believe that when doing youth work, it is crucial to center play and offer many opportunities to connect through laughter.

In the workshops, we took out the energizers but encourage you to choose from the list of games based on your group needs and vibes.





Games and Icebreakers

Name Games

Chitty Chitty Name Game

Everyone stands in a circle, one person in the center. The person in the center will spin around and point at one person, right away that person must duck and the two people on either side must face each other and race to say the other person's name first. The person who says it second, will move to the center and start over by spinning and pointing to someone else. After the group gets good, you can add in a second (even a third!) spinner so that multiple pointings and name-sayings are happening at once!

Walking Energizer Name Game

Everyone is standing in a circle, one person will start walking towards someone and will say their name as they are walking. Immediately that person will have to point to someone in the circle, say their name, and start walking towards them, and so on... The object is to keep everyone moving, saying one another's names, and not to get stalled or stuck. Good energizer, good name game.

Koosh Ball

One person has a Koosh ball, says their name and why they love their Koosh ball. Then throw to someone else who says the same thing. etc... Eventually get two Koosh balls going.

Rhythm Games/Music Games/Dance Games

Music Memory

Two (ish) players leave the room. Everyone else finds a partner and chooses a line of a song to sing. Then they split that line in half and assign each half to one of their hands. Repeat for your other hand with a different partner. (Ex: my right hand is "Row Row Row your boat" and my partner's right hand is "gently down the stream." And my left hand is "Baby you're a firework" and someone else's left hand is "Come on let your colors burst!") So everyone has a half of a line of a song on each hand connected to someone else's half line. Bring the players back in. They each get a turn to tap two hands. When a hand is tapped that person sings their half line. The players are trying to match up the songs. They get two turns, unless they get a match, then they can go again. They can either be in competition or work together. When a match is found, everyone sings the song. Amazing.

Spa-ghe-tti

Get a team of 3. Split any 3 syllable word and give one to each person. ex. Spa, get, ti. Each person sings just that syllable (all at the same time) to the tune of row row row your boat, or another simple song, and someone else has to guess the word!

Boy Band

Get in groups of 4. Put on some pop music. The group of 4 stands in diamond formation. The person at the front of the diamond does their best boy band dance moves and everyone else follows them. When the person up front doesn't want to lead anymore, they rotate 90 degrees so someone else is at the front of the diamond.



The Shopping Cart

Get everyone in a circle. Put on dance music. One person starts. They call out something- anything! ie "The Octopus" "The Radiator" "The BART train".... whatever comes to their mind. The person on their right then has to invent what that dance move is. Once they invent it, everyone else joins in with it. Then it is that second person's turn to call out something and the next person to invent the dance move.

Active/Physical Games

Tunnel Tag

Regular tag but when you are tagged you stand with your legs spread far apart. In order to be freed, someone else must run through your legs.

Mouse Cat Elephant

Like big group paper rock scissors. Two teams will face each other. They will separately huddle and determine which animal they will be (mouse, cat or elephant) and on the count of three will run to a middle line and present their animal, whichever one is the winner (mouse beats elephant, elephant beats cat, and cat beats mouse) will chase the other team back to the starting line, whoever is tagged will go onto the other team.

Huggy Bear

One person is the caller. They call out any number they want that doesn't exceed the number of people playing. If they call out "two" then everyone must hug in groups of two. If someone is left out they are out of the game. Or you can play that they just wait for the next round. If the caller calls out "five" everyone must find a group of five to hug in etc..

Birdy on a perch

Everyone gets a partner, one person is the "birdy" and one person is the "perch". One person facilitates and tells everyone to "mingle" meaning everyone walks around the group in no particular order and away from their partner, and then the facilitator will call out "birdy on a perch" and then everyone rushes to find their partner, when you get to your partner, the "birdy" will jump on the other person's back ("the perch.") The last pair to do so will be out of the game. Eventually the game will wind down to one pair who wins. It is a good idea to have an alternative option to jumping on someone's back in case folks aren't comfortable with that (such as holding up a leg or something that takes some effort but is less contact).

Evolution

Everyone mixes up in the group, playing rock/paper/scissors one on one. When you win, you advance to the next stage of evolution: 1) Chicken (flap your chicken wings), 2) Dinosaur (make a big jaw chomping down with your arms), 3) Monkey (imitate a monkey), 4) Human (checking watches, cell phones walking upright and fast), 5) Supreme Being (sing "stop in the name of love before you break my heart, think it o-o-ver"....and do the proper hand gestures to the song). Eventually, only Supreme Beings will be left and everyone will be singing the song and doing the choreography together. *(note Chickens can only play rock/paper/scissors with other chickens, Dinosaurs with other Dinosaurs etc... the exception is if you realize you're the last Chicken left, then you automatically become a Dinosaur...)*

Short Energizers

Dead Fish-Live Fish



One person yells to the entire group "dead fish" and all group members lie down totally still on the floor, then the master yells "live fish" and all group members must continually jiggle and jump around in the lying down position as if they were a fish out of water squirming about.

5-4-3-2-1

An energizer game, good for waking people up. Everyone stands up and shouts 54321 while shaking their right fist, then 54321 while shaking their left fist, then again with the right foot, again with the left foot, then 4321 with the rights first, 4321 with the left, again with the feet, then 321 etc until it's just ones all around and then everyone cheers. Important that everyone really shout the numbers!

Penguin Game

Song: *Have you ever seen a penguin come to tea?/Take a look at me, a penguin you will see./ Penguin-attention! Penguin- Salute!/Right arm, right arm/Have you ever seen.... (then right arm right arm, left arm left arm...then right arm, left arm, right leg, then add in left leg, then bob your head, then stick out your tongue...)*

Energy Pet Wash

Everybody stand up. Imagine yourself as the most magical pet that ever existed with the most wild, luscious, candy-colored hair. Your hair has gotten a lot of stuff in it over the last hour and it's time to give it an energetic wash!

Starting from the top of your head, scrub, scrub, scrub your whole body with your favorite scented soap.

Great - now let's wash the suds away. With flat hands, *whoosh* your way down your body as if you're pouring water down to wash away the bubbles.

Perfect - but now we're all wet; we can't go out like this! Time to get the magic blowdryer and fluff ourselves back up. Starting from the bottom this time with cupped hands, *whisk* nice warm air up your body and fluff that hair up!

Aaaaah, now we're all refreshed and energized!

Get to Know You Games

Move Your Butt

Everyone sits in a circle, one person stands in the center. That person says "move your butt if...(insert any fact that is true about yourself)" Everyone who the statement is true about must get up and move seats with someone else. You cannot sit in the seat directly next to you or the same seat you were just in.

Two Truths and a Lie

Everyone says two true things about themselves and one lie. Everyone else tries to guess the lie.

Questions in a Hat

Everyone writes down a few questions on different scraps of paper (such as "What was something you collected as a kid?" "When's the last time you laughed really hard?" "What are you scared of?" "What's the grossest thing you ate last year?") Everyone writes down a few and they go in a hat. Pass the hat around and people answer the questions they draw.



Team Building Games

Silent Order Game

The group is silent and has to (using gestures) arrange themselves in order of birth date/height/age/grade etc...

Group Counting

Group must count to a designated number (start small like 10, move up to 20, and so on as the group gets better) without an assigned order. This works best when everyone has to close their eyes and tap into the energy of the group. When two or more people say a number at the same time, the whole group must start over at 1 again.

Caterpillar Game, Leading from Behind

Everyone divides into groups of 4 or more. Stand in a line facing each other's backs, everyone is blindfolded except the last person in the line. The last person will use a system of directions (using hand taps on shoulders, no words or noises!) the team has agreed upon in advance to tell the group to go left or right up or down. The back person will use the taps on the person in front of them who will tap the person in front of them etc. until it reaches the front person who will make the turn. There should be some central object the lines of people are racing to get to first.

Blanket Turn Around

Everyone in the group stands on the blanket (which is an "island" in a sea of "hot lava"). The object of the game is to get everyone standing on the OTHER side of the blanket. The group has to figure out a way to turn the blanket over and have everyone on it at the same time. If anyone steps off the blanket onto the "hot lava" the group has to start over.

Silly Games

Toilet Paper Fashion Show

Small groups get lots of toilet paper and dress one person up in a toilet paper high fashion outfit! Then groups compete in a fashion show.

Sheep

Get in a circle. Everyone must not show their teeth at all times (cover teeth with lips.) There are three ways to pass the sheep: 1. turn to the person next to you and say sheep. 2. Start to turn to the person next to you to say sheep, but then swivel around to the person on your other side and say "shee-boing!" (which makes the sheep start passing the other way). 3. be a creepy crawler and "woodiidooodiido" to anyone in the circle with twinkling fingers pointing to who you want to pass it to. Anyone can pass in any of these ways at any time. Must keep teeth covered at all times. If you see someone's teeth, everyone should point at them and say "I can see your teeth! I can see your teeth!" Then they go in the mush pot.

Animal Noises

Everyone is blind folded. Facilitator has previously chosen groups of people and assigned them to an animal. Facilitator will go around and whisper the animal into each person's ear (it is key to have animals that make noises). Everyone at the same time will have to start making their animal noises and while blindfolded make their way towards the other members of their group by listening for others who are making the same animal noises.



Pass the Face

This is just like telephone but instead of passing a phrase, you pass a facial expression. One person makes a funny or weird face and shows the person next to them. The face will get passed from one person to another around the circle and the final person will show the facial expression to the group and compare with the original face to see how closely the face stuck.

Group Word Association Game

Everyone counts to 3 and then says any word out loud while trying to listen to everyone else's word. Then they count to 3 again and say another word that comes to mind from hearing everyone else's word. This continues for a while. The goal is for eventually everyone to shout the same word. (This works better if just 2 people do it at a time, and then 2 others, and then 2 others. This way it also doesn't matter if it's a big or small group)

Chanukah Gifts

Sit in a circle. Whisper to the person on your right a gift of any kind (i.e nose hair trimmer, nail polish, moon boots, etc...). To the person on your left whisper a use of an item (i.e to make you fly, or to rid the house of rats...). Then everyone should have received a gift and a use. Go around and share! (i.e I got this really amazing gift! It's a nose hair trimmer that helps me fly!)

Drama Games

Running Charades

Like charades except you split the group up into smaller teams (4-6 people). There are 1-2 people who sit the game out and are the MCs of the game. They come up with a list of words such as "Tooth Fairy" "Paperback book" "Arnold Schwarzenegger" "Apple juice" etc.... (can be just one word, but it is better if it is two or more.) The teams all go in separate rooms or in distances far enough away that they can't hear each other and are equidistant from the MCs. Each team sends a representative to where the MCs are and the MC reads each of them the first word on the list. The representative then runs back and has to act out the words using only pantomime, and no words or noises. Standard charades rules and signs apply (i.e holding up two fingers to mean "two words" or pointing to the ear to mean "sounds like"...). Once the team has correctly guessed what the representative is signing, they send a new rep back to the MCs. They whisper the word they just got to the MC and are then given the next word on the list. They run back to their team and act it out. This continues. The teams are racing to see who can finish the MC's entire list first.

Jibberish Dialogue

Two people are designated as the jibberish speakers, two as the interpreters. The jibberish speakers select one word before they start for ex. "Orange." These two have an entire conversation using that word pausing for the interpreters to interpret for the audience.

Improv Ding

Two people are given a scene to act out. They should make sure they speak one at a time. Anytime the facilitator/dinger claps their hands, whatever was just said needs to get changed until the facilitator stops clapping. *Ex My name is Talia (facilitator claps), My name is Fred (facilitator claps) My name is Elephant. If the facilitator does not clap again the game proceeds with the characters name being Elephant.*

Games involving pen and paper

Telephone Pictionary



Everyone writes down a sentence. Pass to the right. Look at the sentence you have received, fold it over so you can no longer see it and draw a picture depicting it. Pass to the right. Look at the picture you have received, fold it over so you can no longer see it and write a sentence that captions the picture....etc...

Question Game

Everyone writes down a question. Pass to the right. Look at the question, fold it over so you can no longer see it and write the answer to the question. Pass to the right. Look at the answer you have received, fold it over so you can no longer see it. Write a possible question that that is the answer to. Pass to the right etc...

Poem Game

Everyone writes down a made up word. Pass to the right. Write down the definition of the made up word you have received. Pass to the right. You now have a word and a definition. Write a poem using the word. Share!



GROUP AGREEMENTS

Every year JYCA youth and staff created a set of group agreements. These guiding values helped create a safe and dynamic group and were thoughtfully crafted from a youth empowerment framework. We pulled out a few that felt particularly unique.





Group Agreements

1. SDRnR: Sex Drugs, and Rock n Roll

- Bring the Rock n Roll! Leave the sex and drugs.
- We know people have different relationships to sex, drinking, drugs, and substances, and we do not judge this!
- In this space, we want to be free of that stuff because we want to prioritize our connection
- Sex and drugs are often where exclusivity most often comes up, and if we're building an inclusive community, this can really get in the way
- JYCA staff are also liable for the safety of youth, so please respect that by committing to this agreement
- We also want to clarify that this doesn't mean you can't talk about your feelings about sex and drugs but please be mindful about how much detail you share and your reasons for sharing.
- In summary: drugs and sex are super distracting. Let's prioritize our connection.

2. Support the Facilitators:

- Supporting facilitators is in fact an important leadership role.
- The way you show up and support the other participants as well as the leaders has a huge impact on the space.
- As a youth leadership organization, we want to encourage youth to take risks, try new things and get to practice facilitating without pressure to be perfect, so it's extra awesome to be an active participant who shows appreciation to the people who are holding this space

3. **Inclusivity:** Help strengthen our bonds. Take mindful moments to notice if anyone is sitting by themselves. Extend kindness and sit down with them or invite them to hang!
4. **No Tokenizing:** Remember that no one is representing the racial/ethnic, gender, sexual orientation, class, religious, etc. group to which they belong. Among all groups there exists a diversity of opinions, feelings, and analyses. No one person can represent the complexity of any group.
5. **Embrace the Awkward!** We all want to belong and many of us fear looking stupid. But it's okay to have quiet moments, or moments of feeling unsure or nervous. That doesn't mean it's awkward, but it's also okay to be awkward! When we embrace the awkward, we're more likely to open ourselves up to vulnerability and connection.
6. **All Jews are Jewish.** You belong here: no one here is too Jewish or not Jewish enough.



Tips on Working with Young People

- *From JYCA staff throughout the years*

- **Get a lot of youth input**

- Youth empowerment means being thoughtful about youth input. Think about what decisions would be fun and powerful for youth to make (everything from snack, game, and agenda choices to organizational structure questions), and which decisions are better for adults to make. Show you trust their thinking and want their opinions. Also- be honest about when youth do or don't have power over decisions.

- **Youth Led doesn't mean adults don't have a big role to play**

- Adults have a very important role to play in youth empowerment work. In order for youth to lead, and to be set up to be successful leading, there needs to be thoughtful and hard working adult allies behind the scenes working to coordinate these opportunities. Adults handing over all responsibility to youth is not empowering, it is important to lay the groundwork to educate youth on topics that are important to them, support them in developing their leadership skills, give positive and constructive feedback, and of course, ask them for their input, ideas and reflections throughout the process.

- **Not Asking About College**

- Most youth in JYCA lived in a subculture that expected them to succeed in school and go to college. The adults in this subculture are trained to ask about college all the time. To counter this, we made it a habit not to ask them about college and to challenge ourselves to find other ways to connect. Or if we did ask about college, we would ask feelings based questions like, "How are you feeling about college?"

- **Showing Excitement:**

- Whenever youth walk in a room, try to get in touch with the genuine part of yourself that is excited to see them! If you can visibly light up when they walk in, it works wonders for the group vibe and seems to release the pressure to be cool.

- **Working with Privileged Youth:**

- Not all JYCA youth experienced race and class privilege, but many did. It can be confusing to work with youth of privilege. It can bring up feelings of annoyance, and questioning what's really important. It can also bring up our own feelings about privilege we did or did not have. Remember that this work is important. All people deserve love and support. It's amazing to get to offer people skills in activism and organizing and mutual aid. This is awesome, seed-planting work. Remember that they are all good. Remember a time when you didn't get it either- you were also good back then too. Do the self work you need to do to find love for them.



- **Check-in**
 - Part of the secret sauce of JYCA was the relationships. Every meeting was also a relationship building opportunity. One of the key ways we did this was through check-in. We started every meeting with a (sometimes quite extensive) check-in– a judgment-free space for youth to share whatever they wanted while everyone listened (and didn't respond). Many JYCA's have talked about this as their favorite part of the experience.
 - Staff also check in! We encouraged staff to share deeply and honestly, but to also be thoughtful. Check in is an opportunity to show youth what life can look like, that there are different ways to be Jewish, to be an activist, to be queer, to have friends... different ways to be an adult and human!
 - Pella, the founder of JYCA, encouraged us to make sure that we were not using check-ins for our own major processing (the way youth participants do). You can still be authentic without sharing unprocessed trauma.
 - A useful example from Pella- if you struggled with alcoholism back in the day but have since figured it out, that is okay to share. If you are still an alcoholic without resources for figuring it out- that's not okay to share.
- **Cursing:**
 - If cursing is part of your vocabulary, no need to hold back. Often in school settings both youth and adults are told to refrain from cursing. Swearing can be one way of signaling that this is *not* school and you're wanting an authentic relationship. (Although if you don't normally curse, no need to add it in– the point is about being real and there are other ways to signal that this is not school).
- **Appreciate, Appreciate, Appreciate:**
 - Appreciation was also a huge part of JYCA's magic
 - We constantly modeled appreciating youth, the youth leaders, and staff. Every year ended with verbal appreciations for the seniors and written appreciations for everyone in the program
 - After every meeting we encouraged staff to send quick texts or emails thanking anyone who played a role, big or small
 - Youth (and also adults!) often feel unseen, so our goal was to send the message over and over again: WE SEE YOU!



The 8 things we most love about working with young people

[Pippi Kessler](#) and former JYCA director [Talia Cooper](#) wrote [this article](#) in 2016 when they co-ran a social justice education program for teens in New York. Pippi and Talia are both coaches and consultants. www.pippikessler.org / www.taliacoopercoaching.com

Here are the 3 reactions we get when we tell people we work with teens:

- Teens?! Awesome!
- Teens?! Eewwww. They're so mean! They're so difficult to work with!
- Teens?! Ugh. I HATED high school.

Collectively, we have been working with young people for 26 years, and over time, we have come to love many many things about this work. All teenagers are different from each other, just as adults are, but there are some particular patterns about youth work that have impacted us.

We hope we can convince more people that teens are awesome.

Here's a list of 8 things we most love about working with young people:

1. IT'S FORCED US TO CONFRONT OUR OWN TEENAGE EXPERIENCES.

In Western Christian culture, time is often described as linear, only moving forward. In that view, once you're done being a teenager, those days are in the past and are unrelated to adult life. For some youth workers, taking a job with teens might be their first experience in revisiting that time period. We love working with youth because we get to remember and reprocess memories from high school all the time. It's helped us see how those experiences have shaped us and how we're both the same and different as we were then. And processing those experiences has helped us see teens as their own people — separate from us — and hold back from projecting our own losses, preferences, insecurities, or unresolved memories onto them. Self knowledge helps us feel powerful and generous and helps us do better work with youth.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE OFTEN HELP US REMEMBER TO KEEP THINGS FUN.

Young people have lived in oppression for fewer years than we have. White supremacy culture hurts people of all ages, but young people are not as practiced as adults are at conforming to the dominant culture. Because of that, when we work with young people it often reminds us of our full humanness: our need to laugh and goof, to snack, to take breaks, to be close to people. We have been so grateful for that lifeline to our inner knowledge of what feels good and what's important.



3. WE HAVE HAD TO CONFRONT OUR OWN FEELINGS OF ADULTISM.

[Adultism](#) is the system of oppression that denigrates young people. It impacts youth differently based on their identities, but it touches everyone. When we were young, we had many people who loved us, but we also had adults who treated us like we were stupid, disrespected us, humiliated us, and minimized our feelings and ideas. Now that we are the adults, we get to fight to respect youth and to experience the healing of treating young people as we wish we'd been treated. We also get to notice the places where we have internalized adultist beliefs: where we disrespect ourselves, where we still subconsciously disrespect youth. This is the work of liberation.

4. YOUTH WORK IS A CRUCIAL PART OF ACTIVIST WORK TODAY — IT'S NOT JUST FOR THE FUTURE.

We often hear adults say: "I do youth work because youth are the future!" and "Teens are going to be the ones to change the world." We refuse to be more adults who put all our hope on the next generation. We need youth in the movement now, not in the future, and we all have a role to play in ending oppression. Intergenerational work is essential because each person has a different point of view. Young people can offer perspectives that can be harder for adults to see, so they are key collaborators. And so are we!

5. YOUTH WORK CAN BE HOPEFUL.

One example is that when we were growing up, we couldn't picture a world where trans visibility was mainstream. Many young people we know are growing up familiar with the idea that gender is a spectrum! This doesn't indicate to us that oppression has ended, or that liberation is inevitable without effort. But it reminds us of the potential of all humans to keep learning and growing and for things to change, even when it might seem impossible. When we see a gap between the norms we grew up with and what youth report as new norms, it challenges us to have hope around the places where oppression seems entrenched.

6. YOUTH WORK REMINDS US ABOUT HOW MANY DIFFERENT KINDS OF REAL AND LASTING RELATIONSHIPS WE CAN HAVE IN THIS LIFE.

As we grow up, many of us are taught to be wary of new people, or to guard our hearts. It's part of white supremacy culture that "professionalism" is unemotional, that "politeness" is small talk, and that revealing ourselves openly is rude. We often see young people open to loving one another in a way that all of us were born knowing how to do and that many of us have trained ourselves to withhold in white supremacy.

It is also part of white dominant culture to start narrowing down the number of relationships and the kinds of relationships people are supposed to have as they get older. An example of this is pressure in dominant culture for people to stop wanting the widespread closeness



they seek out as young people and to switch their focus to building a nuclear family. Young people often remind us that relationships can be plentiful, not just because of the example they set by having many kinds of relationships, but because they sometimes reach out to be close to us as well, modeling what it looks like to openly show affection. It also reminds us of our own capacity to love people — we see the evidence that this ability is still alive in us when we remember how much we still love the friends we made as teens and how much we still love friendship in adulthood. Both of us have also had the experience of being close with people in their teen years who now in adulthood are comrades and friends.

7. YOUTH ARE PEOPLE.

We often hear things like, “Teens are so mean!” We disagree — teens are each different, just like adults! In working with young people, we get to know more about human variation and to be close to people who shape our lives in different ways: youth who are funny, youth who are wise, youth who think like encyclopedias, who are visionaries, who are healers, who are observers, who can get a crowd amped up, who can calm a group down, who love reading, who love singing, who love their families, who know how to survive on their own. Youth are all kinds of people. Getting to work with youth means getting to know more about human experiences.

8. YOUTH WORK HELPS US GROW OLDER.

Sometimes, we hear the myth that youth-work is awesome because “it keeps us young.” We don’t agree. To us that sounds like the ageist belief that there is something wrong with getting older, and the adultist belief that there is something ideal or romantic about being young. The reality is that it is great to age while supporting other people at different stages in the aging process. Working with youth helps us see what’s unique and new for us about the age that we are, to love the particularities of our life paths, and to see that we are changing every day. Working with youth does not keep us young — it helps us love growing older and to process what we gain and lose at each stage.

Thanks for reading our list!

We feel very happy to have gotten to do this work for so long. Working with teenagers has helped us reflect on oppression, identity, closeness, and tough questions about how to build youth power with respect. We’ve gotten to show love to young people, show love to one another, and to collaborate with a wide world of people who care about youth.

To the people who hate young people: our wish is that you get to heal around the experiences that are holding you back from loving them. And also that you don’t take any youth work jobs until you do.



Youth work is not easy or hard, not good or bad. There are many ways that it is exactly the same as other group work, and there are some ways that the features of being young are like nothing else.

Our wish is for the world to be a place where all people experience a lifetime of respect and humanization. Where young people get what they need to grow up safely and be close with a community. Where adult people get to age safely and feel meaning and connection at each phase. A world that has figured out how to care for young people is a world that is better for all of us.

To the young people who have impacted us: thank you for being people in our lives who have taught us about human experience.



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The latest editions included here were revised by former staff Talia Cooper and Sara Tiras. If you have questions please contact Talia Cooper at talia.cooper@gmail.com

If you are in the Bay Area and interested in getting involved in Jewish organizing, check out [Bay Area Jews for Justice](#) (founded by JYCA alums and other local activists).