



ACTIVITY

Definitions and Boundaries of Responsibility

Materials Needed

- Copies of the diagram with the concentric circles for each participant
- Some large pieces of paper, or a whiteboard on which to write the definitions of responsibility

Time Needed

30-40 minutes, depending on the size of the group and the amount of time you want to give to group discussion.

Goal

This activity introduces the idea of responsibility and tries to ask basic questions: what are we responsible for? Does a feeling of responsibility have to include a willingness to act in order to help or protect the thing for which we feel responsible? Does the idea of Jewish responsibility say anything to you?

Directions for Activity

1. In small groups let the participants come up with the group's meaning of "responsibility." What do they think that the word actually means? Coming together, see if you can come up with a definition of the word accepted by the whole group.
2. Back in small groups, let each group try and suggest a list of up to ten things for which they feel responsibility. They might choose things such as my family, pets, studies, friends, schoolmates, youth group, the environment etc.
3. Now give them the following diagram and ask each group to decide in which of these five categories the things they have listed best fit. Are there other categories not mentioned? In the list above, for example, studies would come under the category of "self," pets might come under the category of "self" or under "family" (as would, obviously, family), friends, schoolmates and youth group might come under the category of "Jewish community" or "population of country of residence," while the environment might go under the category, "world."
4. Bring the groups together and compare the results. What, if any, conclusions can be drawn about the feeling of responsibility that the group has for things larger than themselves? What is the meaning of feeling responsibility for something larger than yourself or your family? Can there be any real meaning or is it only words? Is this merely a theoretical belief, a vague feeling or are there practical implications? Can you really feel for a Jewish community or people, a country or a world? Any other big group?
5. Go back to the definition. Does the definition of responsibility include obligation or duty or some other aspect that indicates the need to do something about or towards the things for which we feel responsible? Is responsibility without an element of action meaningful?
6. Talk about the Jewish idea of responsibility. Introduce them to the phrase כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֻבִים זֶה לָזֶה – All Jews are responsible for one another. Does the phrase have any meaning for them? Can they relate to the idea? Why or why not?