

Tu Bishvat Where are we planted?

Geared towards students grades 4-6

By Mrs R Moore, Torah Umesorah Manchester

LO: Students will learn from the growth process of a seed,that just as the seed requires the correct conditions in order to thrive, they too need the right environment in order to grow and become the person they strive to be. Students will then learn how it is possible to overcome a difficult situation where they are under pressure to do something that goes against their standards.

PART 1

Discuss: How does a seed grow?

In order for a seed to grow, it needs the right surroundings and the correct amount of water.

What can prevent a tiny seed from growing properly?

If the environment around the seed is not suitable. (This may mean too little or too much water.)

Explain: When a seed is just starting out and is very small, it needs the right conditions in order to develop properly. It is extremely susceptible to any small changes around it. As the seed starts to develop and grow, its immunity begins to strengthen and it is able withstand a little more.

Connect: (דברים כ':י"ט) - Man is compared to a tree.

The same too, is with us. We are all born into this world with precious clean נשמות. The younger we are, the more impressionable and susceptible we are to our surroundings and the more careful we need to be.

Discuss: How can our surroundings affect us?

- The friends we choose
- The things they talk about.
- Is the language that they use clean and respectful?
- How do they dress?
- Peer pressure.
- Our neighbours.
- The books we read.
- The things we listen to.
- The things that we see.
- The places where we go.

Discuss: Let's brainstorm different ways in which our friends can influence us:

- Encouraging you and helping you believe in yourself
- Helping you to stand up for what you believe in.
- Listening when you want to talk things over.
- Including you in the group.
- Inviting you to join an activity.
- Being someone you look up to and want to be more like.
- Calling you names or putting you down if you don't do something.
- Threatening you.
- Shutting you down.
- Convincing you that it's ok to do something that you don't want to do.
- Telling you that something is normal or popular.
- Believing that it's important to fit in with a group and do what they're doing.
- Feeling afraid of what will happen if you refuse to do something.

Explain: When we are born and our נשמות come into this world, we are holy and pure. The surroundings where we 'grow' affect us all in a big way.

Even if we think that we are strong and won't be affected by our surroundings, we need to be careful. Things that may never have been acceptable, may slowly start to creep up on us, without us even realising.

So; when our parents tell us that we should keep away from something, someone or some place, let's respect them and realise that our parents want to keep us pure.

Summarise: Tu Bishvat is a time where we can see how a small seed can teach us a very powerful lesson! Just like the seed needs the right amount of water, light and patience to grow, so too with us, we need to make sure that we are surrounded by תורה (our water; the key to our very existence) and the right influences, at all times.

PART 2

What happens if we do face a situation where we are under pressure to do something that is not correct or according to our standards?

Activity: Teacher should split the class into pairs. Pairs should all be given one of the following role play / scenario cards to discuss.

- Students should practise acting out their role play and include the answers to the questions.
- The brainstorming and answers should all be done inside the booklets (all students in each group should have their own booklet and write down their notes).
- Challenge students to twist the same scenario (and the summary questions) around and act it out in a positive way, using positive peer pressure.
- Groups should be given approx 20 minutes (or however long the teacher thinks it should take), to complete the task.

• Once their time is up, groups should come forward and present their scenarios and ideas to the class. Teacher should tell some of the students to present the original negative influence scenarios and then after each scenario, bring another group who was given the same scenario, to present it in a positive way.

Card 1

(Background: Leah and Esther are browsing in a clothes shop, looking for a new dress for Yom Tov.)

Leah: Wow! Esther, check this out! It's stunning. This dress will look AMAZING on you, I have no doubt about it. It will suit you so well.

Esther: Yes, you're right. This really is a beautiful dress. But... as I'm looking at it now, I think it's going to be too tight for me. It's a shame.

Leah: What are you talking about? Try it on and you'll see what I mean. It will fit you like a glove.

Esther: I'm happy to try it on, but I'm almost sure that it's not going to work for me.

(Esther tries on the dress)

Leah: See! I told you so. Esther, you gotta get this one.... And.... I get the credit of course!!

Esther: Leah, I can't believe that you cannot see what I mean; it's way too fitted for me. There's no way I can wear this! I would never dress like this.

Leah: I'm sorry Esther, I don't know what's got into your mind to blind you like this. Don't be a chicken and leave it behind. This dress is a gem.

Who is doing the pressuring?
What kinds of words is she using to do it?
What effect might those words have?
Is influence being used in a positive or negative way?

Card 2

Dina: Do you want to come with me to the public library after school today?

Ayalla: No, my parents prefer that I don't go there. Instead we use the Jewish library on Main Street.

Dina: Oh come on! What is so bad about the public library? Come, let's go at 5!

Ayalla: I didn't say it's bad; my parents would just prefer that I don't go there.

Dina: Ok, so don't tell them. You don't even need to borrow anything. I will. Just come with me.

Ayalla: Dina, I told you already; my answer is no. I am happy to go with you to the one on Main Street if you'd like?

Dina: Uch. You're such a nerd. I'm sure your parents won't even care. You're just making a mountain out of a molehill.

Ayalla: Whatever. I don't want to get into an argument.

Dina: Sometimes I really don't understand you. Can't you have a mind of your own for a change?

Who is doing the pressuring?
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Card 3

(During Chumash class, Kayla writes a note to Shevi)

Shevi: Hey Malka, can you pass me the note from Kayla?

Malka: (Gives Shevi a look that says 'not now')

Shevi: It's just a note!!

Malka: Shhh, we are in the middle of class. You know it's not allowed.

Shevi: Oh come on Malka, no one will even notice. Don't be such a goody goody!

Malka: Mrs Rose doesn't allow passing notes. I don't want to get into trouble.

Shevi: Wow! Some teacher's pet you are!

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Card 4

Chana: Nomi, this walk is so refreshing, let's extend it a bit more and take the longer route.

Nomi: I know Chana, I'm so happy that we managed to make it work tonight. The only thing is that my mother needs me home by 9.

Chana: Ok, so it will only take a little longer. Your mother won't even realise. Let's do it!

Nomi: My mother will realise. She needs me to help bathe my siblings.

Chana: Aww. Seriously? It's only a few minutes!

Nomi: Right. It's a few minutes that will make a big difference to my mother.

Chana: Please Nomi, you know how much this means to me. Your mother will understand. It's literally just one more block.

Nomi: I can't Chana. It's not fair to my mother and I won't be keeping to my word.

Chana: (In a very sarcastic tone) Now I know how much you really value our friendship.

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'Escape' tools: If we find ourselves in a situation where we are under pressure, we have a tool that will be able to help us to resist. Teacher should explain what **CARS** stands for and then brainstorm each point with the students on the whiteboard.

CARS (control, avoid, refuse, suggest)

Be the one in control

How can we be the one in control? (discuss)

- Know the reason why you don't want to do something.
- Be prepared with comebacks. (Comments that you can answer right back with).
- Know that not everyone is doing it and that it's OK not to do it.
- Choose to surround yourself with positive friends who respect you and your decisions.

Refuse

How can we refuse? (discuss)

- You can use words like 'nope', 'no way' or 'no thanks'.
- Be persistent. Repeat yourself if necessary.
- Give reasons.
- Use humour (twist it back on them).
- Be careful not to use statements such as 'not right now', as this gives the impression that you may be interested in the future.

Avoid the situation

How can we avoid the situation? (discuss)

- Walk away.
- Think ahead. If you see a situation arising that may be uncomfortable, try to avoid it.

Suggest an alternative

How can we suggest an alternative? (discuss)

- Think of something else that you can do, either with a friend or as a group.
- Plan to spend time with friends in an appropriate safe place.

Activity: Students should make themselves a keyring that they can keep with them, to remind them of this tool. Students should write out the word **CARS** and explain what it means. (Teacher should print out the template for students to use).

Summary: Just like a seed, it's so important for us to make sure that we are surrounded by the right environment and influences.

Let us make sure that we do all we can to keep ourselves safe and surrounded by good people. When we do face an uncomfortable situation that may be harmful to us, let's keep in mind the **CARS** tool and utilise it when necessary.

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