

The Mifgash

The *mifgash* (מיפגש - meeting or gathering) is a 20-30 minute weekly synchronous session with the teacher and learners, plus any teaching assistants (*madrich* and/or *madrichah*; the plural is *madrichim*). During each *mifgash*, there is the opportunity to: check-in with the students; build community; celebrate and share some of the activities/challenges the students accomplished the previous week; and, introduce new content for the upcoming week. Each *mifgash* follows the same format to create a sense of consistency and routine:

- **Greetings/Check-In (3 minutes)**

These are hellos to every individual as they enter the meeting and a quick check-in or activity.

Examples include:

- Pass the greeting – Call on someone and ask how they are feeling today and they call on another person in the group.
- Finding each other – Everyone is asked to reach to the people on either side of them and then above and below.
- Etc.

- **Reflection/Community Building (4-7 minutes)**

This is a reminder of what happened the last session and the activity or challenge that children worked on. The Flipgrid uploads are referenced and 2-3 children's postings are spotlighted each week (over the course of a number of weeks, everyone has a chance to be in the spotlight). The teacher might also do a 3-4 minute community-building activity that fits the theme.

- **New Content (15 minutes)**

This week's learning is introduced and the main activity is accomplished together.

- **Launching At-Home Learning (5 minutes)**

The lower elementary and upper elementary learners are introduced to their activities or challenges for the upcoming week. Ideally, these are done in breakout rooms so that each age group is offered a focused (and exciting) introduction and explanation of their task. A teen assistant, prepped for the task, could meet with one group and the teacher with another.

That said, if the entire educational program meets as a whole and then *k'utzot* or classes are divided into breakout rooms, it will be impossible for a *k'utzah* to use the breakout rooms for this "launch." Zoom offers only one layer of breakout rooms.

If you do not have the option of breakout rooms, you may make modifications to how you handle the lesson. For example, consider asking any children working with the upper elementary challenges to take a few minute break while you orient the younger learners to this week's activity box instructions; however, the older children should stay in earshot. Introduce the activity box to the lower elementary age children, then send them off. Call back the older children and launch their learning for the week. Note that this option will increase the launch to 10 minutes time.

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Follow-Up – Whether or not teachers will be scheduling call-in/“Ask Me” times during the week, children should receive work-reminders and additional resources (links to books online with complementary themes, songs, etc.). Families should be sent or linked to the weekly Family Schmooze questions, designed for casual conversation around the dinner table, while in the car or any other appropriate time.

Session 1: Why do we need *ometz lev*?

The focus:

Learners explore BIG FEELINGS by learning the metaphor of a Jack-in-the-Box exploding out of its container. Then, learners are introduced to the concept of *ometz lev* (strength of the heart, i.e., inner strength), and how people use *ometz lev* to help them control their behaviors when facing a Big Feelings moment.

Note to the teacher – The phrase *ometz lev* is usually translated as “courage” in colloquial English. However, throughout this module, *ometz lev* is used more literally as “strength of the heart,” which is then colloquially translated as “inner strength.” Additionally, this module uses the phrase “big feelings” to mean big intense emotions, positive and negative.

Teacher preparation:

Open on your computer:

- Jack-in-the-Box¹ Video – <https://tinyurl.com/y5lczann>
An option is for the teacher to obtain a Jack-in-the-box and offer the demonstration and explanation yourself, “live action”
- RESOURCE SHEET A: Big Feelings Photographs

Preview for yourself (all of these are posted to the *La-bri'ut* website)

- The challenge video for upper elementary and complementary challenge card
- The “how-to” video for the lower elementary box supplies
- This week’s Family Schmooze

Printed and ready to hold up (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)

- RESOURCE SHEET B: Jack-in-the-Box Image

FOR LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING:

- Open on your computer (available on the *La-bri'ut* website)
 - Lower Elementary Box Instructions Video
 - Upper Elementary Challenge Video

The session:

1) GREETINGS/CHECK-IN (3 min)

Teacher’s choice

2) REFLECTION/COMMUNITY-BUILDING (7 min)

OPTION: [A *madrich/madrichah* could lead this]

Tell your learners that just this week you were feeling (pick an emotion) and then freeze your face into an expression that matches how you felt. Ask everyone to freeze their face to match yours for just 3 seconds (count out the time). In this game, their task is to think of a Big Feeling or emotion they felt recently and when called upon, to first name it and then freeze their face into that look for three seconds. This will go around the group – one person names a feeling, freezes their face and

¹ In the last number of years, some children (and even adults) are triggered by clowns. As a result, the curriculum planning team spent a lot of time talking about the clowns that pop out of many Jack-in-the-Boxes. In the end we concluded that the metaphor was the right one for *ometz lev* and thus worked to find a Jack-in-the-Box that was the least offensive or scary. Just be aware of the clown-challenge as you work with this unit.

then calls on someone else to share their feeling and face. If this goes fast enough, and you have an extra two minutes for this section, you could time the first round and then challenge the children to share their feelings/faces at least 20 seconds faster than the first round of the Face Game. Tell them that this week, they'll be spending time on Big Feelings – this was just a start.

3) NEW CONTENT (15 min)

a) INITIAL INTRODUCTION: Explain to the *k'vutzah* that you are starting a new module today that is based on a Hebrew phrase, *ometz lev* (אִמְצָ לֵב).

- i) Ask if anyone recognizes any of the Hebrew words in the phrase *ometz lev*. Some learners may respond that they've heard the phrase, and it means "courage." Others may be familiar with the word *lev*, meaning "heart." Many will have no idea of its meaning.
- ii) Explain that *ometz lev* is something that is helpful to use when suddenly are faced with Big Feelings, big emotions. *Ometz* means "strength" and *lev* means "heart," so the phrase means strength of the heart, or an inner strength.

Ask for examples of some big feelings. Some responses may include: anger, big sadness, fear, great excitement or happiness. Make sure the learners identify positive "big feelings," as well as more negative ones.

- iii) The question for today, in addition to thinking about some big feelings, is:
"Why do we need *ometz lev*, inner strength?"

b) EXPLORING WHAT "BIG FEELINGS" ARE AND WHY WE NEED OMETZ LEV:

- i) Introduce the Jack-in-the-Box metaphor (*note, most children will not yet know the meaning of metaphor, but they should get the idea*). Either show the JEC video (see: <https://tinyurl.com/y5lczann>), or attain a Jack-in-the-box and do a live demonstration with a parallel explanation to what the video portrays.

If you (or a *madrich/madrichah*) do the live demonstration, you need to talk through the three options for the Jack-in-the-Box:

- #1 – *The latch is fully and quickly released*: He explodes out of his box, not in control of his feelings
- #2 – *The latch doesn't open*: He does nothing, stays in his box and stew in his feelings
- #3 – *The latch is carefully open in a controlled way*: He engages his *ometz lev* and slowly comes out of his box, expressing his feelings and making good choices, slowly and carefully

If you show the JEC Jack-in-the-Box video, feel free to pause at each option and discuss, or continue until the end and review the three choices.

- ii) Explain to the learners that they will explore some Big Feelings. Introduce the images on RESOURCE SHEET A, telling learners that each picture is an example of someone having a Big Feeling.

For each image, ask learners:

- (1) To identify and name the Big Feeling.
Why do they think this person has the specific Big Feeling?
What do they think will happen next? What might this person do?
- (2) Consider how this person might stop and control their behavior choices in response to this Big Feeling.

Tell the students: All feelings are valid; all behaviors are not. Ask for ideas of what that means. Explain that it is ok to be angry, but it's not ok to be mean to someone, hit, or hurt their feelings "just because." Big feelings are okay, inappropriate behavior is not.

Guide students to understand that to help make good choices, everyone needs *ometz lev* to keep from exploding out of our boxes.

c) QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT:

- i) How hard is it to calm oneself down from a Big Feeling Moment?
- ii) If one is very sad, angry, happy or excited – why might it be good to stop and find one's inner strength (one's *ometz lev*) and make a best-as-one-can behavior choice?

4) LAUNCHING AT-HOME LEARNING (5 min) – Ideally, this section is done in breakout rooms, one for the lower elementary learners and one for the upper elementary ones. *Madrichim* may be tapped to help lead one of these conversations. Please read the more detailed information on page five for "Launching At-Home Learning."

- a) **Lower elementary** (those with the activity box) – They have materials to create their own pop-out-box, along with 3 small pieces of blank paper. After they complete their pop-out-box, throughout the week they will look for three more examples of Big Feelings, each to be written or illustrated on one of the small pieces of paper and then folded (if necessary) to fit inside the box on the top of their pop-out. Their challenge (and fun) is to open their pop-out-box in different ways to see what happens to the Big Feelings when the springy-thing (1) explodes out of the box, (2) stays shut inside the box, or (3) engages *ometz lev* (inner strength) and is slowly let out of the box. They should post a video on Flipgrid of what happens with different big feelings as they open their box.
- b) **Upper elementary** (those with the video challenge) - Share the video that introduces the first at-home challenge, or ask learners to watch it on their own at home. Consider showing it all the way through and then returning to one of the embedded questions (your choice) to discuss as a group for a few minutes. Using screen-share, introduce learners to the *Ometz Lev* Challenge Card #1.

Make sure they see and understand the challenge of the week: to identify 2-3 Jewish characters who have been in a situation with Big Feelings, where they used (or could have used) their *ometz lev*, their inner strength. The character could be from Torah stories, prophets, rabbis, historical figures, or anyone else. Their task is to create 2-3 character cards (use the template provided on the Challenge Card, or copy something similar onto index cards or slips of paper) to introduce their character. Afterwards ask them to post photos of their card(s) to Flipgrid. See Challenge Card #1 for full instructions.

FAMILY SCHMOOZE: *The card to send home is on the Learner's page of the La-bri'ut website.*

This is either an idea or behavior that parents can reinforce in the coming week, or a set of open-ended questions that families may discuss around the dinner table, in the car, or anywhere they are together. If there is more than one child in the family, the Schmooze will bridge the learning and thinking between younger and older, older and younger.

Our module focuses on the Jewish concept of *ometz lev*, inner strength. We are using the term in the sense of using our inner strength to make better behavior decisions when faced with Big Feelings.

This week, the children were introduced to the metaphor of a Jack-in-the-Box as a way to see that Big Feelings (anger, excitement, sadness, happiness, anxiety) can explode. They learned that Jack popping out of his box illustrates three behavior choices – an explosion (he and his emotions pop out), nothing (he just stays in the box and stew in his feelings), or through a controlled opening he emerges with a bit of care. So, when faced with Big Feelings we can use our *ometz lev* (our inner strength) to determine what our next behaviors will be. Additionally, children were told: all feelings are valid, all behaviors are not. You may wish to pick up on the Jack-in-the-Box metaphor as you and your child encounter various Big Feelings as the week unfolds. To see the Jack-in-the-Box metaphor in action, check out: <https://tinyurl.com/y5lczann>

Looking for a book for your child? Consider any of these that touch on our theme:

- [*Sadie's Almost Marvelous Menorah*](#), by Jamie Korngold (for ages 5-6), a 2019 PJ Library book
- [*Terrible, Terrible*](#), by Robin Bernstein (for ages 5-9), a 2011 PJ Library book
- [*The Koufax Dilemma*](#), by Steven Schnur (for ages 5-9), available on Amazon
- [*Life, After*](#), by Sara Littman (for ages 11-13), available on Amazon

FOLLOW-UP DURING THE WEEK

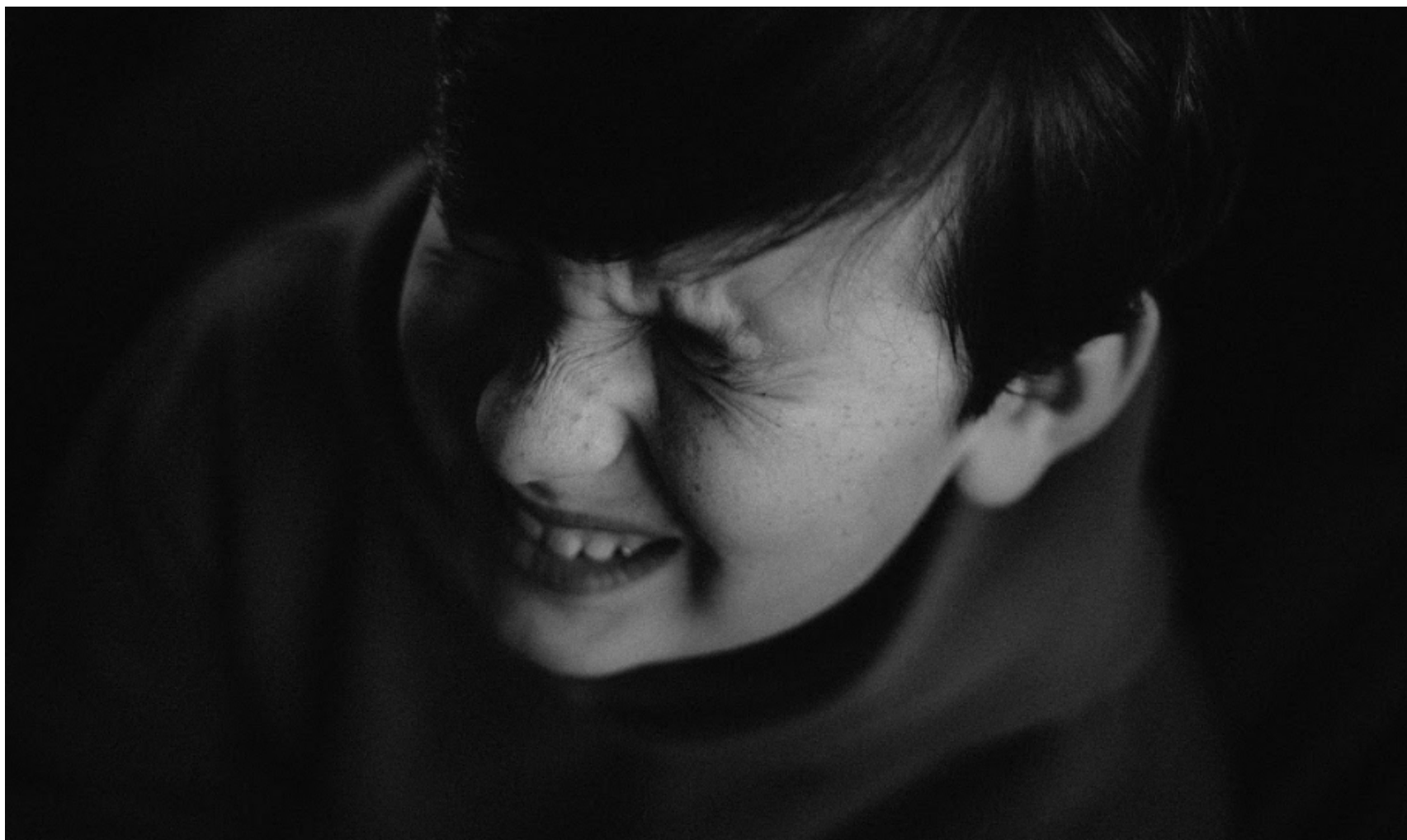
- Immediately after the session send upper elementary children and parents a link to the challenge video so they may watch it again AND send lower elementary parents a link to the box instructions video to share with their child.
- Send a check-in note to the families; include the Family Schmooze page which has a link to the Jack-in-the-Box video, if they choose to watch it.
- Remind students to share their work on Flipgrid ("I can't wait to see what you post!")
- Respond to children's postings
 - To encourage students for future sessions
 - To choose what to share in the spotlight section of the next session.

RESOURCE SHEET A: BIG FEELINGS PHOTOGRAPHS

















RESOURCE SHEET B – JACK-IN-THE-BOX IMAGE

Note: this is a picture of the same box used in the intro video



