How to Say Yes and Managing Expectations When You Have to Say No
Customer Service- ushers, greeters, support staff and leaders.
Speaker: Shelley Cohen

Session Resources

Session Slides .................................................................................................................. 2
Usher Tips for Greeting and Assisting ............................................................................. 20
Sample Organization Chart for Inclusion Committee ..................................................... 22
Inclusion in the Shul: #EPIC ............................................................................................ 23
Starting with “Yes!”
And Managing Expectations

Cohort Members:
Conservative Synagogue Adath Israel of Riverdale
Park Avenue Synagogue
Park Slope Jewish Center
Temple Beth Emeth
Union Temple
Westchester Reform Temple
Starting with “Yes!”
and Managing Expectations

- Communicating Inclusion
- Teaching Inclusion
- Organizing for Inclusion
Communicating Inclusion

THINK
(before you speak)
Communicating Inclusion: T

Think = Is it True?

- Your synagogue has made inclusion a priority by joining 16 month UJA/Federation Inclusion Initiative
- A House of Worship has a responsibility to include
- Inclusion is much more than words
- Inclusion is a process that needs to be put in place
Communicating Inclusion: 
think = Is it Helpful?

- Bridge the Gap between “Ideal” and “Real”
- Ask questions:
  - How can I help you?
  - What do you need?
  - How can we make this happen?
  - What are the next steps?
- Be a good listener. Validate. Be compassionate.
- Be a problem solver
  - Involve others in brainstorming solutions
- Be Creative
Communicating Inclusion:

think = Is it Inspiring?

- Inclusion is doing the right thing
- Doing the right thing can be Inspiring

Your excuse is invalid.
Communicating Inclusion: think = Is it Necessary?

- 18.6% of Jewish population has some form of physical, developmental or learning disability
- Does “No” prevent inclusion from happening?
- Synagogues need to be role models
- “You once were a stranger in a strange land”
Communicating Inclusion:

thinK = Is it Kind?

Words that come from the heart enter the heart

“Al Pi Darko” is a communal obligation not only a personal one

"Teach the children according to their needs"

Proverbs
Teaching Inclusion

- Empathy
- Action
- Accountability
Teaching Inclusion: Empathy

- Be proactive:
  - I don’t know about _____, but I would like to be helpful
  - What are your needs?
  - What specifically would you like the synagogue to provide at this time and let’s see if we can make that happen
Teaching Inclusion: Action

- Action needs training
- Training enables “Yes!”
- Who needs training?
  - Clergy
  - Staff
  - Lay leadership
  - Volunteers
Teaching Inclusion: Action

- Ignoring is the worst
  - Lifelong vs. temporary disabilities
  - Create support groups
  - Advertise to galvanize
  - Break down the issue:

- Partner to find solutions
  - Fellow staff members
  - Professionals in your congregation
  - Professionals outside the congregation
  - Power of Google

Teaching Inclusion: Accountability

- Don't Drop the Ball
- Share information with person/family member of a person with disability
- Be specific
- Bridge gap between ideal and real and it might turn into something fabulous
Organizing for Inclusion

- Inclusion Committee required to effectuate congregational transformation
  - Report to President
  - Represented on Board & applicable committees
  - "Voice of Inclusion"
- Organization structure required for 2-3 years until inclusion best practices are internalized
Organizing for Inclusion

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CLERGY

INCLUSION COMMITTEE

PRESIDENT/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Ritual Committee
- Program Committee
- Communications Committee
- Membership Committee
- Education Committee
- Greeter/Usher Committee
- Security Committee
Starting with “Yes!”
and Managing Expectations

THINK

• EMPATHY
• ACTION
• ACCOUNTABILITY

Teaching Inclusion
Communicating Inclusion
Organizing for Inclusion

Starting with Yes
Living Inclusion

“You don’t have to be great to start, but you do have to start to be great!”
Usher Tips for Greeting and Assisting

1. Welcome all guests equally:
   Speak directly to the person with a disability; converse as you would with anyone else. Smile and greet all congregants. If shaking hands is a protocol, then be sure to offer a hand to everyone who enters the synagogue, regardless of ability level. If you have a question for someone with a disability who has an aide, ask the person with the disability first. The first attempt at conversation should be to the person with the disability instead of the aide. Making small talk with a person who has a disability is great, just like it is for anyone else.

2. Keep all doors and walkways accessible:
   Make sure people are free to move throughout the space. If an entrance becomes particularly crowded, have another entrance if possible. Displays should not be in front of entrances, wastebaskets should not be in the middle of aisles, and boxes should not be stored on ramps.

3. Be aware of invisible disabilities:
   Respect the person’s needs and requests whenever possible, even if the disabilities are hidden. People may request something or act in a way that appears strange, but requests or behaviors may be disability-related. If accommodations are possible, they should be respected.

4. When in doubt, ask!
   Ask people how you may assist; do not assume someone needs assistance. Not all people with disabilities need help. Always speak directly to the person with a disability. Be sensitive about physical contact. Some people with disabilities depend on their arms for balance.

5. Inform people about the sensory calming room:
   The specifications about the sensory calming room are found in the next section of this packet. Make sure directions to the room are close to the sanctuary doors or are listed in your service packet. There may be moments when the sanctuary doors should remain closed, but please be aware that people with disabilities might need to exit the sanctuary if necessary even in these times. Ushers should let them leave.

6. If a person is blind or has vision impairments:
   Identify yourself by name and note you’re the usher. Offer your arm, don’t take theirs. Offer a large-print or braille machzor. If applicable, walk on the opposite side of the guide dog. When walking, describe the setting while noting any obstacles, like “Walk
forward to the end of this aisle and make a full right.” When you reach the seat, ask if the person needs anything else and say you’re leaving.

7. If a person has a developmental disability:
   Speak to the person in clear sentences, using simple words and concrete concepts. Don’t use baby talk or talk down to them. Gauge the pace, complexity, and vocabulary of your speech according to theirs. If the person is an adult, they can make their own decisions, unless you’re informed otherwise.
Sample Synagogue Organization Chart

**Sample Synagogue Organization Chart**

**Board of Directors**

**Clergy**

**President/Executive Committee**

- Ritual Committee
- Program Committee
- Communications Committee
- Membership Committee
- Education Committee

In order to effectuate congregational transformation, an Inclusion Committee must be established with a unique role. An effective Inclusion Committee will:
- Report to the President
- Be represented on the Board and all applicable synagogue committees to enhance “voice of inclusion” in synagogue workings

This organization structure may be required for a period of 2-3 years until inclusion best practices are inherent in organizational thinking.

---

**RespectAbility**

**The Synagogue Inclusion Project**

Funded by Leo Oppenheimer & Flora Oppenheimer Haas Foundation

**UJA Federation of New York**

Good together.

---

Starting with Yes  RespectAbility Cohort Hands-On Inclusion Summit- March 2, 2016
Inclusion in the Shul: #EPIC

FEBRUARY 21, 2016, 7:05 PM

Zevi Fischer

Zevi Fischer is an attorney who practices in the area of real estate litigation. He was born and raised in ... [More]

It was a typical Shabbos in our shul. Men and women came to doven. The rabbi delivered a beautiful drsha, and another young person reached a milestone event — his Bar-Mitzvah. But in one special way, this Shabbos was truly epic.

For many years, the inclusion of special needs children in shul programming, particularly, the indispensable Shabbos morning groups, has been overlooked. This issue resonates in several areas. Without such a program, parents of these children are often reluctant to come to shul, for fear of them being disruptive. Further, this incapability leaves the siblings of these children without the full opportunity to sit in shul with their parents and gain from that important experience. This seemingly insurmountable challenge recently landed on the doorsteps of our shul, and the question was how we would respond. The answer: our shul stepped up to the plate and hit a grand slam homerun.

In fairness, several shuls, including one in our own community, already have well-established inclusion programs. Were we going to allow those shuls to be the exception that proves the rule? Or, would we join those ranks and help sustain a new standard. Proudly, with the help of both our rabbinic and lay leadership, the strong influence and overwhelming encouragement of our rebbetzins, and the input of our youth director and assistant youth director, our shul received our first special needs child into the Shabbos morning groups program. By all accounts, it was an amazing success.

With incredible guidance from a member, who is an experienced expert with special needs children, and the care and devotion of a wonderful shadow, the young boy had an amazing Shabbos morning. He participated in all of the activities, dovened with the group and even won a dovening award for his effort. Significantly, his parents were able to focus on dovening in shul and/or spend necessary quality time with their other children, knowing full well that their son was in such good hands.
At the conclusion of Shabbos morning groups, those in charge delivered glowing reports of the boy’s performance. Then, the moment came that every parent of a special needs child dreams about. One young man, who was a group leader of the group that received the special needs boy, approached the father to give a report. He spoke nicely of the boy’s morning experience, detailing how positive it was.

He then said those magical words that every parent loves to hear, “We really hope your son comes back and joins us next Shabbos.”

It was a typical Shabbos in our shul. But in one special way, it was truly epic.