

JUDAISM VALUES:

BRINGING COMFORT TO THE SICK

Bikur Cholim



A hands-on toolkit for
doing social action with
your family



Doing Good is a program of The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington.

Doing Good  Guide

Doing Good Guide

The Jewish Federation's Doing Good social action initiative offers meaningful opportunities for people of all ages to make a difference in our community.

The Doing Good Guide provides a way for adults to discuss Jewish values with kids, engage in hands-on activities and reflect on the experience as a family.

Practicing this Jewish value by visiting someone who is ill can benefit both the visitor and the sick.



The Jewish Federation
OF GREATER WASHINGTON



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List of PJ Library and
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Judaism Values Card

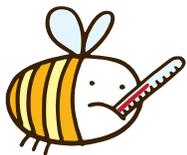
How to Use the Doing Good Guide

Whether your child grows up to be a doctor, teacher or chef, the profession they choose is shaped by their interests and talents. The kind of individual they grow up to be, however, is formed by the lessons and experiences we instill as parents. The Jewish Federation understands the importance that practicing Jewish values and good deeds has on a child's development.

Engaging in volunteerism at a young age leads to more empathetic, compassionate adults—the Yiddish word for this is *mensch* (a good or honorable person). We have created this Doing Good Guide to help impart this Jewish value in an interactive, hands-on way. You can use this for your immediate family, or you can invite other families to join you to Do Good together.

The quantities for the hands-on activities are listed per project—multiply it for the number you wish to make the number of people joining you. After reading through this guide and deciding which project(s) you'll do, contact the intended recipient to confirm that you have a destination for the items, then use these steps when doing it with your family.

STEP 1: Understand the purpose and impact of the Jewish value by reading the value introduction and exploring any of the suggested books.



STEP 2: Ask framing questions to set the tone for the experience and the learning. For older kids, allow them to read and ask you these questions. You don't have to be an expert. Respond to tough questions by saying "Good question; let's research an answer together."

STEP 3: Do the planned project. Older children can help plan and set up, too!

STEP 4: Reflect on the experience using the discussion questions. A child processes an experience by talking about it.

STEP 5: Deliver the completed items to the recipient organization. Bring your family with you, if appropriate.

STEP 6: Discuss everyday ways to Do Good and to incorporate this value into your daily lives.



Introduction to the Value



Bikur Cholim: ביקור חולים

English translation: visiting/bringing comfort to the sick

Pronunciation: “**bih-koor kho-leem**”

Value in Judaism:

We live up to our potential when we answer the call to serve with a willingness to be “present,” and when we are concerned with people’s need for personal growth, comfort and human interaction. *Bikur cholim* (visiting the sick) is considered in Judaism to help provide physical or emotional support. This value, which helps in the development of empathy, is relatable to children—they can imagine what it is like to have been sick and can often remember what (or who) helped them feel better. It is one of the most sublime ways to nurture a caring community.



Text Basis:

“One who visits a person who is ill takes away a sixtieth of that person’s pain.” –The Talmud (a series of texts that comment on rabbinic law, compiled in the 6th century CE)

Historic Jewish Role Model:

The *mitzvah* (commandment or good deed) of *bikur cholim* connects to the Torah when God visits Abraham after his circumcision.

Modern Jewish Role Model:

Herman Taube (1918–2014) was a local role model for the Jewish value of *bikur cholim*. He organized other Holocaust survivors to create a support network, made it a point to visit as many people as he could, and wrote pamphlets on the protocols for

visiting the sick and bringing comfort. Taube had been a medic in the Polish Army in World War II and emigrated to the States after the war, eventually settling in Rockville, MD. He was also a lifelong poet and writer.

Local Connection:

One organization that helps bring comfort to those who are ill is Bikur Cholim of Greater Washington, which provides “comfort and support to those who need it most.” Bikur Cholim organizations allow people to feel that they are part of the community as they face medical-related challenges. Volunteers lift the spirits of those who are ill and let them know that they are not alone.” Many synagogues and day schools also have committees to organize member families to help those who are sick.

Scientific Research:

There are many benefits to visiting the sick. One of them has been scientifically proven: through the phenomenon of “mirror neurons,” in which people subconsciously mimic the reactions of those around them, your cheerful visit can cheer up the person you’re visiting.

Setting the Example:

Whenever you practice this *mitzvah*, talk to your kids about it and tell them why you are providing support in this way. Share the thought behind your actions, whether you’re making a meal for someone local or sending a card or text to someone far away. It may feel like bragging to tell your kids every time you do a *mitzvah*, but that’s okay! They should learn to be proud of these good deeds.



Framing Questions

We have found that asking questions before, during and after a social action project will help turn the “service” into “service learning.” For children, talking about an experience helps them process it and learn from it, making the service more meaningful and memorable. You may use any or all of the following questions to frame the projects that you chose. Be sure to share your answers with your children, too!

Discuss these questions before engaging in the service project:

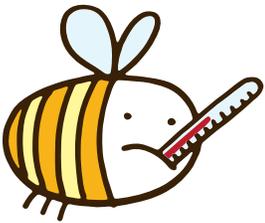
- What do we know about the organization we are benefitting?
- What do we know about the service we will do?
- What is one thing we hope to learn?
- What is one thing we are apprehensive about?
- What Jewish values do we think we will see in action or experience today?
- What stories/examples can we pull from Jewish tradition, our lives or experiences that will help us find a meaningful and personal connection to our volunteer service?
- How should we dress and behave to be appropriate for the setting and activity?



Hands-On Activity Instructions

There are lots of ways to practice the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick). We've compiled a list of hands-on activities that you can do with your family. There are so many ways to show kindness to strangers or loved ones by making any of these DIY projects for someone who isn't feeling well.

- ♥ Hospital Activity Kits
- ♥ Bookmark Buddy
- ♥ Boo Boo Buddy
- ♥ Coloring Sheets
- ♥ Soup Kits



Hospital Activity Kits

When you're not able to practice the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim* by visiting someone personally, you can show kindness to strangers by creating activity kits for children in hospitals. Build and customize your kits to provide a fun activity for sick children in hospitals. Patients spend a lot of time waiting, and these kits can help alleviate boredom. The hospital's Child Life Specialists can distribute the kits to children as needed.

Choose any of the following item ideas for your Activity Kit:

You can include one or all!

- 1 activity book (with crosswords, word searches or other puzzle games)
- 1 blank notebook with 4 crayons
- 2 sheets of stickers
- 4 sheets of origami paper with folding instructions
- 1 Bookmark Buddy (see instructions on next page). You should also provide instructions and materials for the patient to create their own!
- A bracelet with materials for the patient to create their own bracelet to give to someone else.



♥ **AGE & SKILL SUGGESTIONS:**

- Ages 3 and up (individual project ages may vary)
- Fine motor skills and creativity

INSTRUCTIONS:

Place each item nicely in a clear Ziploc bag. You can add a label to the front to let the recipient know who it's from or add a card inside with a positive, uplifting message. Please keep in mind that these kits will be given to children in hopes of comforting them during a difficult time.

NOTES TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Ask the recipient organization if something is needed before creating it. If possible, bring your family with you to drop off the kits they made.
- Avoid the following: used items, stuffed toys, Silly Putty, play-dough, balloons, food items and bottles containing liquid (e.g. bubbles).
- Loose beads can be a choking hazard—check with the recipient about this option before creating activity kits with these.
- Take the same time and care while you put it together as you would with a gift for someone in your own family.
- When writing cards or notes to recipients you don't know, avoid referencing religion or their illness.

Keep in mind that some hospitals won't accept donations of fewer than 50 so they are able to give one to each patient. You can make the kits over a period of time and deliver once you've reached the hospital's minimum. You can also contact the hospital directly to get an idea of the number needed.

Possible local hospital recipients:

Children's National Medical Center (DC)

childrensnational.org
202-476-2062

INOVA Children's Hospital (VA)

inovachildrens.org/child-life-services
703-776-6486

Ronald McDonald House (DC-MD-VA)

rmhcdc.org
202-529-8204

NIH Children's Inn (MD)

childrensinn.org/thoughtful-treasures
301-594-5364



Hands-On Activity Instructions



AGE & SKILL

SUGGESTIONS:

- Ages 3 and up (individual project ages may vary)
- Fine motor skills and creativity

Make Your Own Bookmark Buddy!

SUPPLIES:

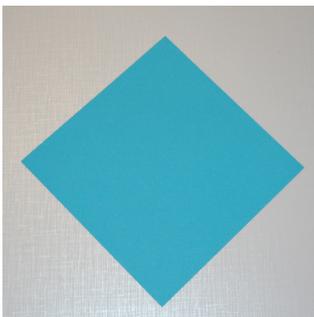
- two sheets of origami paper
- googly eyes or a marker
- glue stick
- scissors



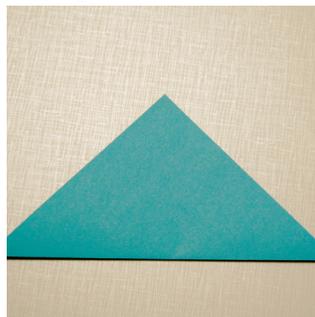
INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Fold the square paper in half diagonally so you make a triangle.
2. Bring the bottom sides of the triangle up to meet at the top point.
3. Open the sides back up, and fold down the top flap down so that the point meets the bottom.
4. Wrap and tuck the bottom points up and around the flap that you just folded down.
5. If you want, cut another sheet of colored paper to fit inside the bookmark you just folded. It should be slightly smaller than 1/4 of the piece of paper. Then use a glue stick to hold it in place.
6. Decorate your bookmark as creatively as you like. You can use googly eyes, make teeth, or color on a face. Create an animal, monster or fun character. Use your imagination!

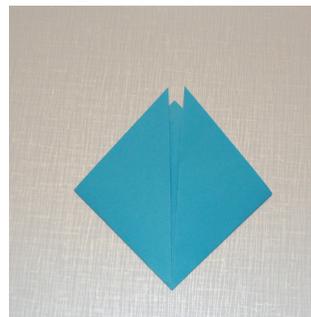
Start



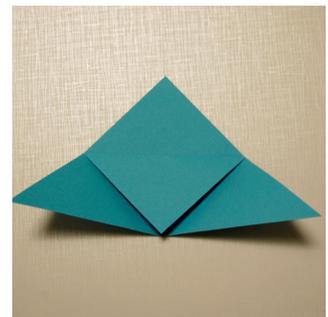
Step 1



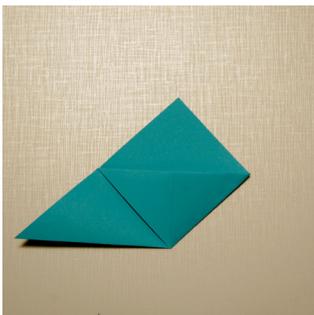
Step 2



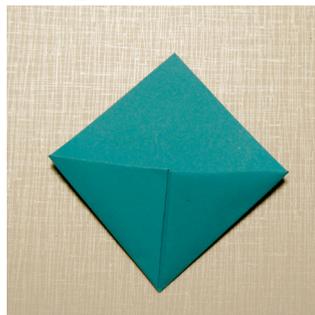
Step 3



Step 4A



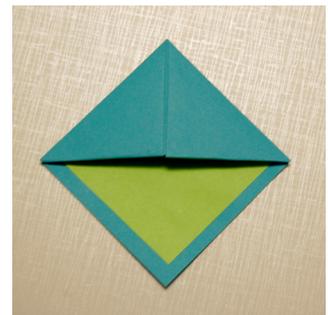
Step 4B



Step 5



End



Hands-On Activity Instructions



Boo Boo Buddy

Make a Boo Boo Buddy for a friend or family member to use as a hot or cold compress to sooth discomfort caused by bruises, scrapes, fevers, headaches, insect bites or other ailments.



AGE & SKILL SUGGESTIONS:

- Ages 4 and up (younger kids may need more help)
- Involves fine motor skills

SUPPLIES:

- 1 new sock (colorful ones are a great option; child-size is preferred)
- 2 cups plain, uncooked rice
- Aromatherapy essential oils (lavender, chamomile, citrus or vanilla are nice options)
- Sturdy twine, ribbon or yarn

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Put rice in a small mixing bowl, then mix in a few drops of the essential oils.
2. Using a funnel or a recycled toilet paper roll, open the sock and scoop in all of the rice.
3. Leave enough room to tie off the top. Be sure you don't overstuff it!
4. Use twine, ribbon or yarn to make a tight knot, securely closing the top.
5. If you are giving the Boo Boo Buddy to someone, be sure to include the "How to use" note below.

How to use:

To use the Boo Boo Buddy, put the sock in the microwave next to a cup of water, and heat it for 1-3 minutes. To use as an ice pack, place it in the freezer for 45 minutes.



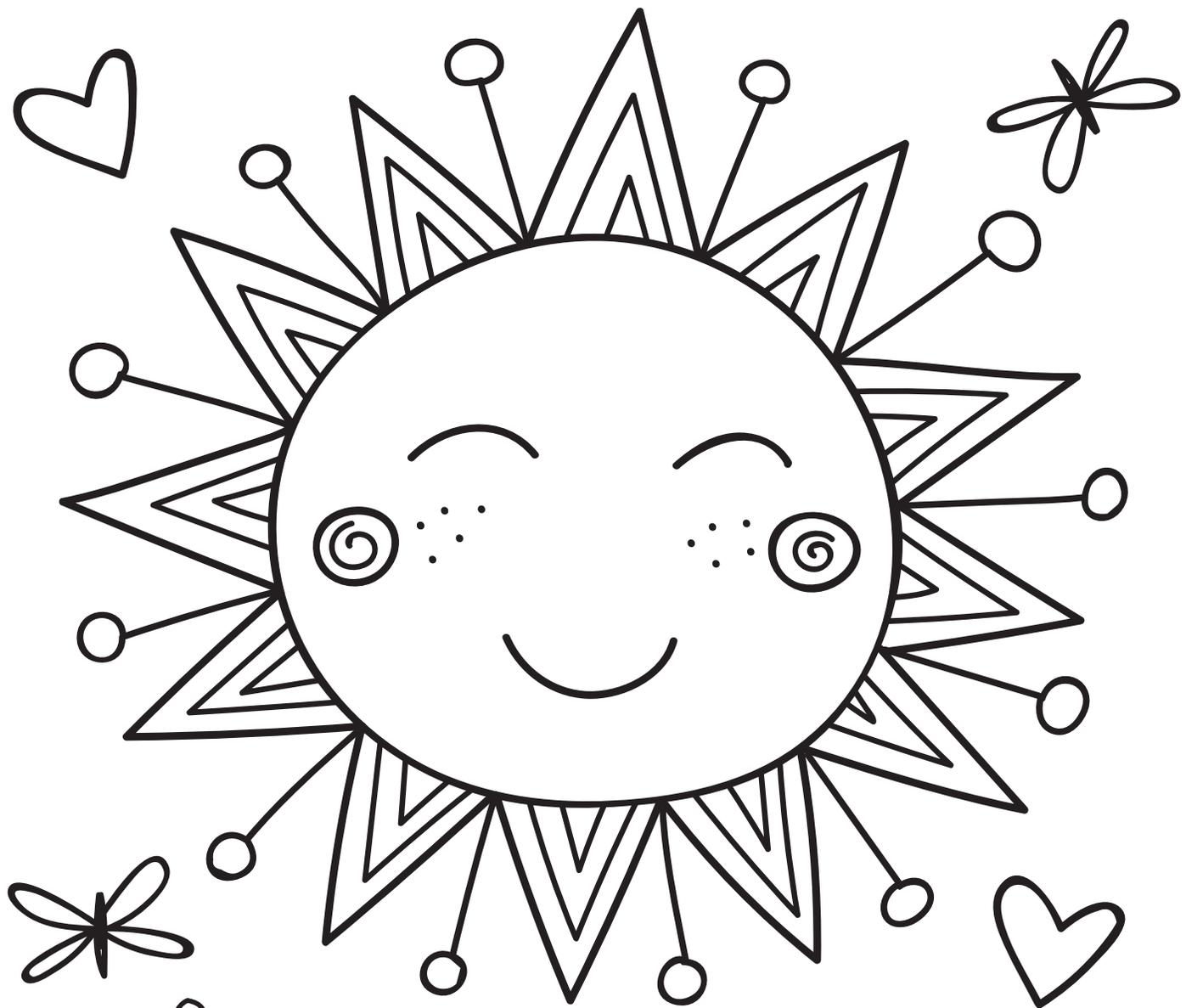
AGE & SKILL SUGGESTIONS:

- Ages 3 and up (individual project ages may vary)
- Fine motor skills and creativity

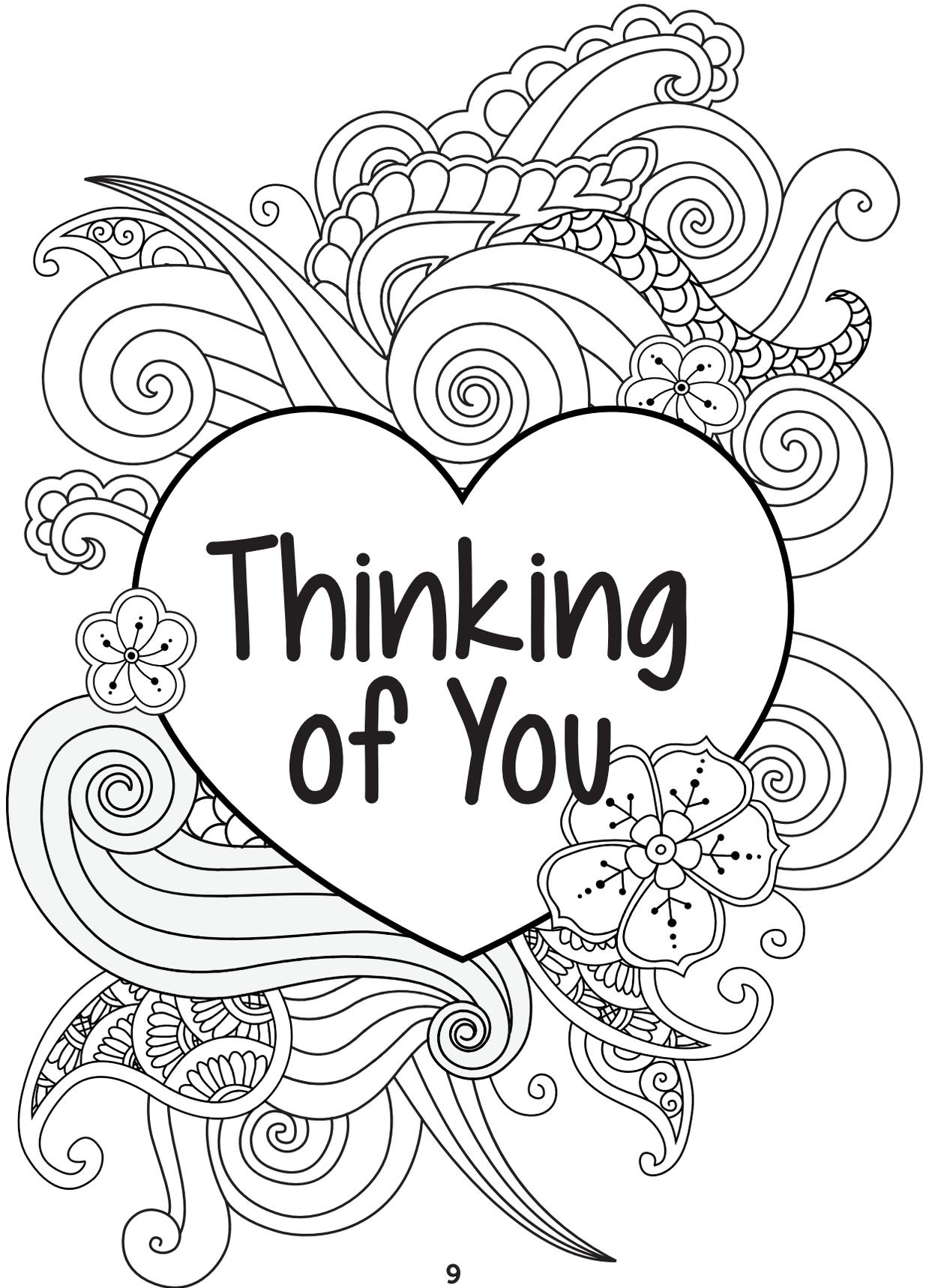
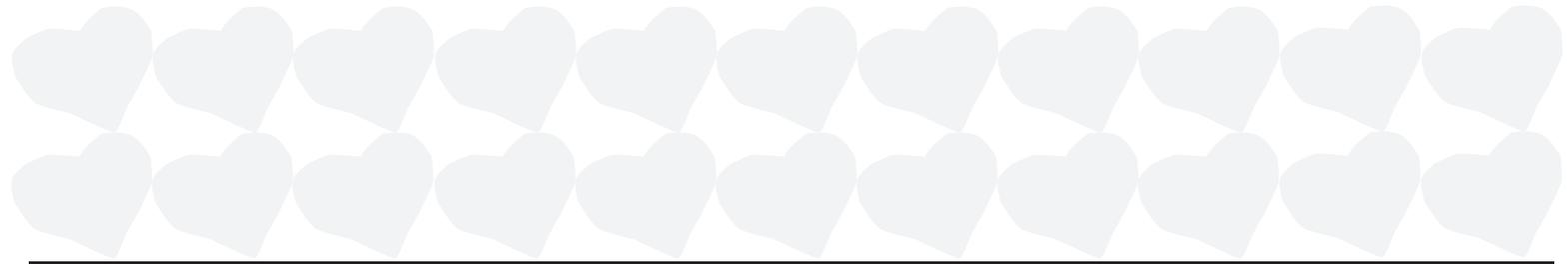
Decorate a Coloring Sheet

When a faraway relative or friend isn't feeling well, take a picture of your child holding it and send it to them electronically.

Coloring sheets
located on next page ►



You are my
sunshine



Hands-On Activity Instructions

Soup Kits

INGREDIENTS & SUPPLIES FOR ONE SOUP KIT:

- 1 plastic or paper container with a secure lid
- 1/4 cup of split peas
- 1/8 cup of barley
- 1/4 cup of lentils
- 1/8 cup of dried minced onions
- 1 tsp of Italian seasoning
- 1/4 cup of chicken-style bouillon
- Soup crackers



AGE & SKILL SUGGESTIONS:

- Ages 5 and up
- Involves fine motor skills and math skills

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Be sure to wash your hands before handling food. If giving the food to an organization (and not to a friend), use hair nets and gloves to comply with food safety requirements.
2. Measure the ingredients and layer each of them into the container.
3. Place the lid securely on top.
4. Add a sticker with the cooking directions, listed below under “How to make.”
5. Place a handful of soup crackers in a separate, small plastic baggie.
6. You can place the soup container, bag of crackers and a spoon in a paper bag. Decorate the bag before filling it to help brighten the day of your sick friend.

How to make:

In a heat-safe container, add soup mix and 1/2 cup of hot water and let it sit for 5–6 minutes.



Tips & Tricks

- Always find a recipient before creating any of the projects. Connect with them to make sure what you're assembling is needed and appropriate.
- When doing any of the projects, make sure to put in as much care and effort as you would for someone in your own family.
- When donating multiple packages to an organization, make them as uniform as possible.
- Include an ingredient list for dietary or allergy restrictions.

Suggestions for written notes:

When writing cards or notes to recipients you don't know (e.g. for activity kits donated to a hospital), make sure they are positive messages. Try not to remind them of the situation or hardship they are experiencing and avoid religious messages. It's best to provide some examples for your child to copy. Try a variation on these messages:

- Sending you sunny smiles and warm hugs!
- I hope you enjoy making your own (activity kit item)!
- Here's something to brighten your day!
- Have fun with this!
- Thinking of you!

Making it easier for kids:

- One way to underscore the lesson to your child that they are creating something for kids who are similar to them is to have your child keep one of the kits for themselves (if you wish).
- For younger children you may wish to pre-cut some of the materials. For older children, you could have them do more of the cutting and preparation.
- The attention span for kids aged 3-5 years old is about 20 minutes. It gets longer as they get older. You may want to build in breaks or time for a child to stop the activity and come back to it.

Ideas & Supplies:

- Some great places to get bulk supplies include DiscountSchoolSupply.com, Amazon, AC Moore, Michael's, Jo-Ann Fabrics, dollar stores and Costco.
- Get more ideas at
 - pinterest.com/pjlibrary/service-projects-for-kids
 - Jconnect.org/Doing-Good/Doing-Good-Project-Ideas

Post-Activity Discussion Questions

Use these questions to start a dialogue as you reflect about your service experience.

General Reflection Questions:

- Did we contribute to a greater good? How?
- How did performing this volunteer activity make us feel?
- What Jewish values did we act on or see? Were there any we did not expect?
- What surprised us today? Are there things we see/understand differently now?
- What positive elements and challenges will we remember about this service?
- If we were to continue this type of service in the future, could we make an even larger impact? Would it be with the same organization/project or with something different?
- Do we have a different perspective on our community or our responsibility to it?
- Did our service remind us of any Jewish stories from our family or heritage?

Reflection Questions Related to This Value:

- Can you remember a time when you felt ill? What helped you feel better?
- We know that visiting the sick can alleviate some physical or emotional pain. How can we set aside time to visit those in need of comfort and support?

TIP: Empower older children to be the reporters—they can ask the questions and lead the discussion.



Everyday Ways to Do Good

Gemilut Hasadim (doing deeds of loving kindness)

In the Jewish tradition, our lives will be meaningful and grounded if they revolve around three pillars: Torah (Jewish instruction and general learning), *Avodah* (ritual worship and personal reflection) and *Gemilut Hasadim* (doing deeds of loving kindness). Marion Wright Edelman, founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, reminds us that, “Service is the rent we pay for living. It is the very purpose of life, and not something you do in your spare time.” So how may we infuse our lives with service all year long? How can we connect with the inspiration of Good Deeds Day and the power of community over 365 days?

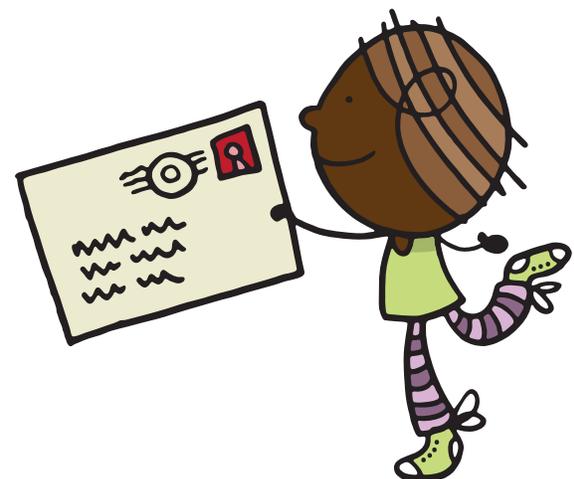
EVERYDAY OPPORTUNITIES TO DO GOOD:

- Write thank you notes for the people who help you every day.
- When someone isn’t feeling well, have your child call or make a video for them. You can also take their picture holding a “Get Well!” sign to send by text or email. Visiting the sick—when appropriate—is a great hands-on activity for kids.
- Spend quality time with your elderly neighbors.
- When you hear someone local is sick, offer to bring soup, a meal or baked goods.
- Sign up to deliver meals with Meals on Wheels.
- Volunteer at a children’s hospital.
- Collect new, unopened toys to donate to a children’s hospital.

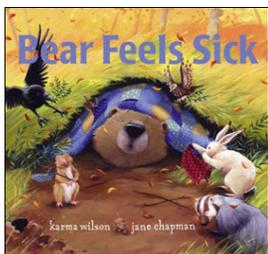
- As a family, donate your *tzedakah* (collected coins for charity) each month. Your kids can make a sign to put next to the *tzedakah* box that names the charity and the Jewish value it embodies.
- Visit Jconnect.org/DoingGood for more volunteer activities.

How to do a great *bikur cholim* visit:

- Contact the patient or their caregiver first to make sure they’re accepting visitors.
- Focus on your purpose for bringing comfort and happiness to one in need of healing; leave other concerns at the door.
- Prepare your child for what they might see by explaining that the person they’re visiting may not have their usual demeanor.
- Think of what you and your child can do to help: holding hands, talking, reading the news, bringing flowers or food, giving the primary caregiver a respite or sharing jokes.
- Follow the patient’s cues: do not reference their illness or appearance unless they bring it up.



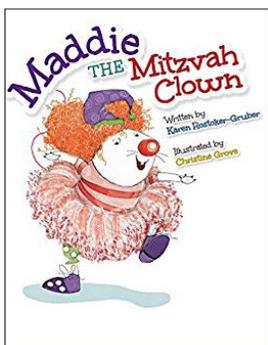
PJ Library and PJ Our Way Books about this Value



Preschool & Kindergarten Books

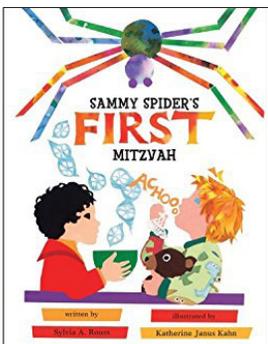
Bear Feels Sick
By Karma Wilson
Illustrated by Jane Chapman

Bear is not feeling well at all; he is achy, sneezy, wheezy and sick. Mole, Hare, Mouse and the rest of the gang try to make Bear feel as comfortable as possible in his cave. Under the care of his friends, Bear starts to get better, but as soon as Bear is well, guess what happens? All his friends get sick!



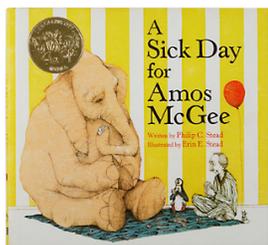
Maddie the Mitzvah Clown
By Karen Rostoker-Gruber
Illustrated by Christine Grove

Maddie wants to do a *mitzvah* (good deed), but she's very shy. Dressing up as a clown makes her feel a lot more confident, though, and clowns can do a special mitzvah—cheering people up at her grandma's senior center!



Sammy Spider's First Mitzvah
By Sylvia Rouss
Illustrated by Katherine Janus Kahn

Everybody knows that spiders don't perform *mitzvot*—spiders spin webs. But Sammy sees that Josh isn't feeling well and could use a visitor. Luckily, Josh's friend Moti is ready to lend a hand.



A Sick Day for Amos McGee
By Philip C. Stead
Illustrated by Erin Stead

Every day, zookeeper Amos McGee rides the bus to the zoo, where he plays chess with the elephant, races the tortoise, and reads stories to the owl. But one day he feels too sick to go to work, so his animal friends hop on the bus to visit him—performing the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*, visiting the sick. Before long, Amos will feel healthy as a horse.

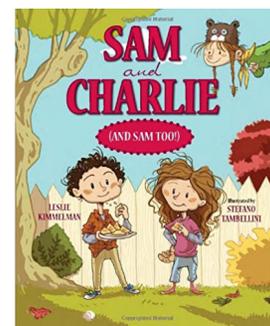
Early Elementary Books

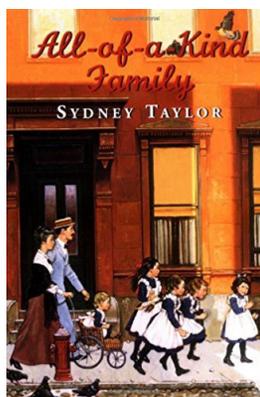
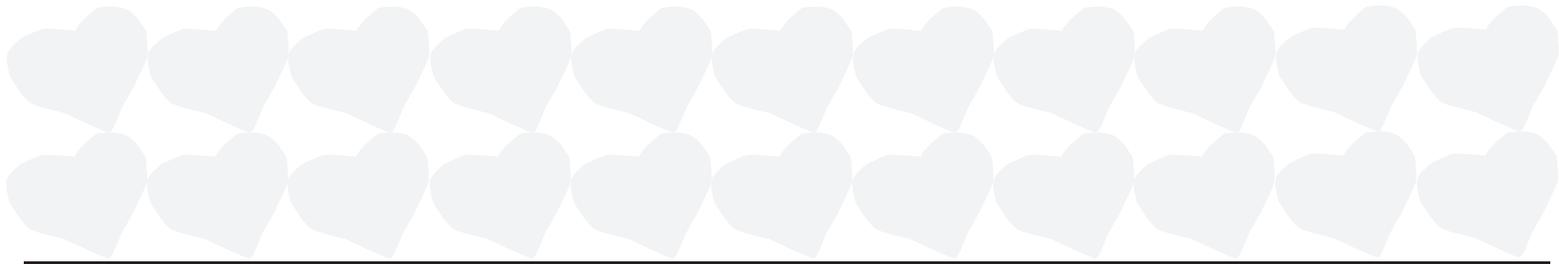
***Even Higher:
A Rosh Hashanah Story***
By Eric A. Kimmel
Illustrated by Jill Weber

In this old-world tale, the rabbi of Nemirov disappears every year just before Rosh Hashanah. The villagers are certain their rabbi flies up to heaven to speak with God. A skeptical Litvak determines to follow the rabbi to see where he goes. He witnesses an enormous act of human compassion: dressed as a peasant, the rabbi helps at the home of a poor and elderly woman.

***Sam and Charlie
(and Sam Too!)***
By Leslie Kimmelman
Illustrated by Stefano Tambellini

New neighbors have moved in next door to Sam: two girls named Charlie and Sam (too!). As the three of them become friends, they share jokes, Jewish holidays, misunderstandings and a sick day—and soon learn what it means to “love your neighbor as yourself.”



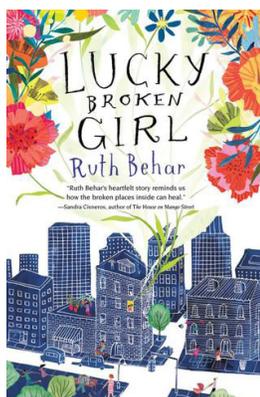


Elementary Books (Ages 9 and Up)

All-of-a-Kind Family

By Sydney Taylor
Illustrated by Helen John

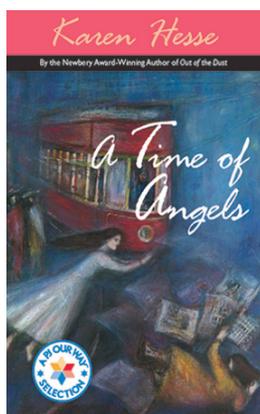
In the chapter “Ella Lends a Helping Hand,” Ella discovers her friend Guido’s mom is sick and cannot work. Ella, her mom and Miss Carey from the Settlement House carry out the *mitzvah* of *bikur cholim*.



Lucky Broken Girl

By Ruth Behar

When Ruthie moves to New York from Cuba, the other kids think she’s stupid because she doesn’t know much English. Just when she starts to fit in, she gets into a bad accident. People say she’s lucky to be alive but being stuck in a body cast for a year sure doesn’t feel lucky!



A Time of Angels

By Karen Hesse

When her family gets the flu during the 1918 epidemic, 14-year-old Hannah is forced to flee for her safety. Far from home, Hannah discovers that sometimes help comes from the most unlikely places.

Descriptions courtesy PJ Library and PJ Our Way®.





JUDAISM VALUES:

Being Present *Hineni*

We live up to our potential when we answer the call to serve with a willingness to be “present” and when we are concerned with people’s need for personal growth, comfort and human interaction.

Vayomer: “Moshe, Moshe.” Vayomer: “Hineni!” God called to Moses, and he responded with “I am present and ready to serve!”

—Exodus 3:4

In Exodus and Deuteronomy, the Torah asks us to be vigilant towards the needs of others. “*Lo tuchal lehitaleim. You must not remain indifferent!*”

—Deuteronomy 22:3

Application:

Being there for people could include the practice of *bikur cholim* (visiting the sick) and *nichum avaylim* (comforting the mourner). Being present to respond to a need is a divine attribute; we must transcend human tendencies of hiding our eyes and being indifferent and instead step up and rise to the occasion with action. One example is Queen Esther, whose story is told in the Book of Esther.

Discussion:

We know that, when visited, the sick thrive and those that grieve find comfort. **How can you set aside time to visit those in need of comfort and support?**

When inviting other families to do these projects with you, print this page as an educational hand-out for them to take home.

