

Israel – it IS Complicated

Program Essentials

Program's Vision

We all share the responsibility: to create and maintain a safe environment, to listen and talk, to learn and teach, to respectfully share a wide spectrum of fact-based thoughts and views about Israel; while being open to doubt our own views.

Principle 1: Keep it Confidential

In order to keep the environment safe for all participants we all pledge to keep the identities and contents of the discussions associated with the Program confidential.

Principle 2: Listen and Understand

Listen deeply to one another, pay attention to both words and intent. Hear what the other person is saying. Listen with respect, especially when you disagree. Listening is profoundly therapeutic and is also deeply spiritual.

Shema Yisrael, the great command and most fundamental Jewish Sentence, means: "Listen, Hear, Israel."

Principle 3: Keep Talking

Keep talking, even when you disagree. The more you talk, the more you are likely to eventually find a way to better understand each other.

Remember: the other person is more likely to listen to you, after (but only after) being heard and understood by you.

Principle 4: Be Humble

Follow the paths of Rabbi Hillel: Always be humble and modest by striving to understand the point of view with which you disagree.

Listening is more an act of will than an act of Skill. It remains the first rule of conflict management.

Principle 5: Show Respect and Curiosity

Avoid Judgement and assumptions.

If you show contempt for other participants, they will show contempt for you. If you show respect for other fellows, they will show you their respect.

Give respect = pre-requisite to earning respect.

Principle 6: Stay Curious and Open

Maintain a positive attitude, be curious to find overlap between your views and another's opinion. Be open to question your own truths. Judge the Action, not the Person. Express your opinion in a kind and constructive manner. Avoid לשון הרע lashon harah – slander and character naming.

Principle 7: Israel Has the Right to Exist

Israel's right to exist is not debatable here. All opinions that stem from Israel's right to exist are welcome. Opinions that express (explicitly or implicitly) the denial of Israel's right to exist may not be voiced here.

Principle 8: Seek Co-Existence

Never ever seek to inflict defeat on a fellow participant in the gathering who holds different views. The conversation is about learning and growing. Think in terms of what is best for Am Israel.

Definition of “Am Yisrael” = The People of Israel;

In our program we define this as: All the residents of the State of Israel that abide by its laws without distinction of race, religion, gender and origin including: Jews, Muslims, Christians, Arabs, Druse, Baha'i, Circassians, non-believers and all other minorities; as well as the Jewish People in the Diaspora and their fellows who support Israel.

Principle 9: We are Family

...and will remain so, even if we disagree. All who care for Am Israel are responsible for one another. Being a family and a community is what keeps us together. We don't need to agree with each other, we DO need to care about each other.

Principle 10: We are Perceived as a People

We are united by a covenant of shared memory, identity, and fate, even if we have differing perspectives on our faith and hold different political stances. It is as a People we stand before the world and judged by others. The world doesn't make distinctions; nor do anti-Semites.

In Summary:

- Listen attentively and talk politely so we can learn together.
- Keep it all confidential.
- Be curious, humble and show respect.
- Express opinion about actions, not persons, in a kind and constructive manner.
- We are one family, caring for each other and perceived as A People despite our differences.
- Israel's right to exist is the solid foundation of our voiced opinions.