

Teaching Guide

A Kid's Mensch Handbook

Step by Step to a Lifetime
of Jewish Values

Tina Finck



Copyright © 2004 Behrman House, Inc.

Springfield, New Jersey

www.behrmanhouse.com

Editor: Scott E. Blumenthal

Design: Itzhack Shelomi

ISBN: 0-874-41701-5

www.behrmanhouse.com

Manufactured in the United States of America

Contents

Introduction

- Introduction to the Textbook
- Structure of the Textbook
- Structure of the Teaching Guide
- Before You Begin...

Working with Students with Special Needs

Scope and Sequence

Part I: The Mensch Basics

1. Welcome to *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*
2. Making Mensch Choices
3. Taking Mensch Actions

PART II: Be a Mensch to Yourself

4. Seeing Yourself as a Mensch
5. Treating Yourself as a Mensch

Part III: Be a Mensch to Others

6. Ready, Set, Mensch
7. Be a Mensch to Your Family
8. Be a Mensch to Your Friends and Classmates
9. Be a Mensch to Everyone

Introduction

Introduction to the Textbook

A Kid's Mensch Handbook invites your students to explore timeless Jewish values in an accessible, modern, and exciting way. Through real-life examples, interactive activities, and a wealth of Jewish wisdom, *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* helps your students to make ethical choices, take positive actions, and treat all people (including themselves) with integrity and respect.

With *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*, you can provide your students with the knowledge and understanding to help foster Jewish values in their everyday lives. At the same time, the textbook will enrich your students' Jewish identities and connection to the Jewish community.

Structure of the Textbook

A Kid's Mensch Handbook is divided into three sections:

- I. "The Mensch Basics" introduces the definition of a mensch: a good person, a person of integrity and respect. Because each of us affects the world in profound ways, a mensch is someone who makes choices and takes action that affects the world in *positive* ways. Jewish sources, experience, and wisdom serve as guides to becoming *menschen*.
- II. "Be a Mensch to Yourself" examines ways that introspection and self-examination can lead to self-respect, and how self-respect can lead to respect for others. This

section includes discussions of *b'tzelem Elohim*—the concept of being "created in God's image"—and *sh'mirat habriyut*—the mitzvah of caring for one's health.

- III. "Be a Mensch to Others" explores ways to treat others with respect, generosity, and compassion. This section includes discussions of *talmud Torah*, "Jewish learning," *sh'lom bayit* "peace in the home," *dibbuk haverim*, "attachment to friends," and *k'vod habriyot*, "respect for all people."

For a detailed breakdown of each chapter's lesson and core concept, see the Scope and Sequence on page 8.

A Kid's Mensch Handbook also contains the following recurring features:

- **Mensch-Wise** Thought-provoking questions exercise skills in critical thinking.
- **Mensch Spotlight** Profiles of role models from Jewish history strengthen the link between the chapter and students' daily lives.
- **Top 5** Short interactive activities based on the main topic of each chapter help students apply Jewish values to their own lives.
- **Under the Mensch-ifying Glass** Definitions of key Hebrew terms clarify the meaning of core Jewish values.
- **A Note of Middot** Explorations of *middot*—virtues—related to the chapter's main Jewish value.

Note: Izzy the Mensch-in-Training (the red-head cartoon character) appears throughout *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*, offering his wide-eyed commentary. Izzy's role is to amuse the students in the interest of enhancing their overall pleasure in the book and in Jewish learning. Allow students to giggle with him, give him funny voices, and enjoy watching him "grow up" as the book progresses.

Structure of the Teaching Guide

The Teaching Guide closely follows the structure of *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*. There are nine chapters in the Teaching Guide, corresponding to each chapter of the textbook. Each chapter in the Teaching Guide contains sets of questions and answers that follow the main subject headings in the textbook.





Note: *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* provides opportunities for your students to learn by sharing their opinions and personal experiences with one another. This Teaching Guide contains open-ended questions to help you enhance this experience and keep the discussion focused and productive.

Each chapter of this Teaching Guide contains the following features:

- **Overview** A brief statement summarizing the chapter's central governing idea.
- **Learning Objectives** Specific goals for each chapter that correspond to the concepts and ideas that students should understand when they complete the chapter.

- **Vocabulary** Key terms and definitions from each chapter to use as oral review or on flash cards.
- **Set Induction** An initial thought or activity, based on core concepts from the chapter, to begin teaching the chapter materials.

In addition, each chapter in this Teaching Guide contains many of the following features:

- **Expand the Conversation** Questions and exercises to encourage students to further explore ideas and information presented in the textbook. Look for the  icon.
- **Bring It to Life** Supplemental activities to reinforce and extend textbook learning. Look for the  icon.
- **Photo Op** Ideas and techniques for using the textbook's photographs to stimulate conversation and reflection on the chapter's content. Look for the  icon.
- **As a Family** Home-based activities to engage the whole family and reinforce classroom learning. Look for the  icon.

Before You Begin...

Here are some thoughts to keep in mind as you begin using *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*:

- *Foster a sense of security and fellowship.* Make it clear that your classroom is a safe space where students will be heard with respect and be guided, not judged. When a student prefers not to share, please respect his or her privacy.

- *Be aware.* Your students will come to class from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. Some students will have the maturity to manage emotions well; others will not. Teach all your students to see Jewish values as a supportive guide to making life's tough decisions.
- *Include your students' parents along the way.* Many of the discussions and exercises in *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* lend themselves to parent participation and family learning. The "As a Family" features in this Teaching Guide provide ideal opportunities to "close the circuit" between class and home.

Note: Writing may be difficult for some students. You might invite individual students to do the written exercises without concern for grammar or spelling. If it seems helpful, you can also allow them to represent their ideas in pencil drawings or cartoons.

Working with Students with Special Needs

Children vary in their learning styles. Some students learn best with a hands-on approach, while others do best with a visual or an auditory approach. In general, teachers who present material in many different ways will be able to reach many more children.

Teachers of children with special needs have extra challenges. These children include those with a broad range of cognitive, physical, and behavioral disabilities that have an impact on learning. It is always helpful to find out from parents what accommodations are made for their child in secular school. The suggestions included below are primarily for those children with learning, perceptual, or attention problems.

For students with attention and auditory processing problems, teach in small increments and present one direction at a time. Ask the children to repeat the direction to be sure they have processed it.

For children with attention problems, limit teaching segments to 10 to 15 minutes and allow for movement between activities.

For children with decoding problems, make flash cards with a few key words. Children can take them home and practice them with their parents. Keep a shoe box of flashcards for children who need them.

Provide opportunities for choral reading rather than asking children to read aloud individually.

For children with attention and visual figure-ground problems, mask parts of the page so they can see only the section that is being worked on.

For children with fine motor and handwriting problems, limit the amount of writing, drawing, and cutting that is required. The teacher or assistant may do such difficult parts of a project and allow the student to finish the task.

Scope and Sequence

Each chapter of *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* examines a core concept that serves as the chapter's main theme:

Chapter	Pages	Core Concept
1	8–13	Each of us affects the world in profound ways. A mensch is someone who takes action that is generous and kind, action that affects the world in <i>positive</i> ways.
2	14–23	It is important to make good, ethical choices. Jewish sources, experience, and wisdom can help us to determine and make good choices.
3	24–35	Once we've made good choices, we must take action. An important guide to taking "mensch action" is The Golden Rule: <i>v'ahavta l'reacha kamocho</i> —love your neighbor as yourself.
4	38–49	We respect ourselves because we are created <i>b'tzelem Elohim</i> —in God's image. When we understand how it feels to respect <i>ourselves</i> , we better understand how others feel when we respect <i>others</i> .
5	50–61	We exercise self-respect through <i>sh'mirat habriyut</i> —guarding one's health. By caring for our bodies and our minds, we better prepare ourselves to be <i>menschen</i> to others.
6	64–75	A good way to learn how to treat others respectfully is through <i>talmud Torah</i> —Jewish learning. <i>Talmud Torah</i> may be the most important mitzvah of all, because learning leads to action.
7	76–87	We practice treating others respectfully with the value of <i>sh'lom bayit</i> —peace in the home. Through <i>sh'lom bayit</i> , we learn the qualities of forgiveness, responsibility, and patience.
8	88–99	We learn to treat friends and classmates respectfully with the value of <i>dibbuk haverim</i> —attachment to friends. Through <i>dibbuk haverim</i> , we help one another to be our best selves and reach our greatest potential.
9	100–111	We can show respect for all people through the values of <i>k'vod habriyot</i> —respect for all people; <i>derech erez</i> —good manners; <i>klal Yisrael</i> —support for the world Jewish community, and <i>tzedakah</i> —righteousness.
Special Sections	112–118	We can review what we've learned with "Mensch Magic," "Mensch Diploma," and the "Handy-Dandy Mensch Index."