



## **MAKING OF A MENSCH**

### **DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 19-99+**

If you haven't watched the 10 minute film *The Making of a Mensch*, you can watch it [here](#). Then dive in:

\*Please feel free to tailor the language as appropriate for each age group.

1. What does being a “mensch” mean to you?
2. Why do you think there’s been a revival of interest in Mussar and character building recently? What is it about our world that has inspired this revival?
3. How would you update Mussar for the digital age?
4. Look at the Periodic Table of Being a Mensch. Which qualities do you think are most important to being a mensch? Why?
5. Now look at the Periodic Table of Being a Mensch again. What are your top five strengths?
6. What are five qualities (or middot) you want to work on?
7. Pick one of the strengths you want to work on. What’s something you could do right now to bring more of that strength into your life?
8. Draw a pie chart of the middot that you’re made of. Which middah is the biggest slice? Which is the smallest? Are you happy with the results, or would you want to change it?
9. We rely on different middot in different situations. Which middot are most useful to you at work? At home?

10. What are the middot you appreciate most in others? Are they similar to or different from your biggest strengths? How do those similarities and differences play out in your relationships?
  
11. Write your own "Mensch Code": Ten commitments toward being a mensch that will guide your journey.

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## FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 19-99+: CHECK-IN

A little while ago, you watched *The Making of a Mensch*. Let's check back in and see what's changed for you since then.

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1. *The Making of a Mensch* talks a lot about tradition. If you were to create a new tradition to help people improve themselves, what would it be?
2. One of the earliest Mussar texts was Rav Saadia's "How a Person Ought to Behave in the World." If you wrote a sequel, what are some things it would cover?
3. Rabbi Yisrael Salanter created rituals and practices to help people learn to be mensches. What's a modern ritual or practice you'd create to do the same?
4. Martin Buber believed that art, music, and literature were vital to character formation. What artistic, musical, or literary work has been most vital to your character development?
5. One way that some people work on the quality of gratitude is to say 100 blessings a day. Write a short list of things you're grateful for today. Ten is fine!
6. Sometimes the best way to make a big change is to make a small change over and over. What's one small thing you're doing over and over to improve yourself?
7. As the film suggests, one way to practice Mussar is to focus on one specific quality each season. Take a look at the "Periodic Table of Being a Mensch" below and pick the qualities you want to work on this winter, spring, summer, and fall. What will you do each season to strengthen these four qualities?
8. In Mussar, you create your own path. Draw an actual map, with landmarks, plotting out the way to the personal goals you're trying to reach.

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## FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION GUIDE AGES 19-99: CHECK-OUT

The journey continues, but let's stop to assess the progress you've made so far. How much of a mensch have you become this year?

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1. What are you proudest of doing this past year?
2. If you could do one thing over, what would you do differently?
3. Which *middah* (*strength/quality*) was most important to you this year?
4. Did Mussar practice become a part of your life? How?
5. Where do you want to be a year from now?
6. How might you use Mussar to get there?