



Webinar Discussion Guide

How Play with Grandchildren Can Bring Out the Sweetness of the High Holidays

By Sari Kopitnikoff
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Purpose

This guide provides prompts for discussion of the JGN webinar “How Play with Grandchildren Can Bring out the Sweetness of the High Holidays,” led by Sari Kopitnikoff on September 17, 2024. Grandparent Groups, other grandparent social meet-ups, and program facilitators can view parts of the webinar recording <https://jewishgrandparentsnetwork.org/video-library/> together, then use the prompts for participants to share their own experiences and thoughts.

Key Takeaways

- Play is a powerful way to connect with kids and teens. Research supports the value of incorporating humor and play into our interactions with kids — it encourages healthy emotional development, facilitates social learning, creates positive associations and memories, boosts creativity, and promotes general wellbeing.
- All learning can be made more relevant, memorable, and enjoyable with the introduction of a game, activity, craft, or discussion.
- Keep your eye on the goal: What are you hoping to accomplish in your playtime? What would your grandchildren appreciate? What is age appropriate?
- Once you pick an activity: What materials, if any, do you need to prepare in advance?
- Keeping your grandchildren in mind, make necessary accommodations and adjustments for your specific needs. For example, if your grandchild tends to get frustrated easily, focus on low-pressure activities that emphasize cooperation over competition.

Tips and Tricks for Play with Your Grandkids

- Keep expectations modest and low-key. (“Let’s try something new” instead of “I have the best game for us to play, and you’re going to absolutely love it.”)
- Be open to adjusting activities based on your grandchildren’s moods or interests. Sometimes the best moments happen when plans change.
- End the activity before it peaks. Leave your grandchildren wanting more; give them something to look forward to the next time.
- Kids do well when they are challenged and given the necessary support to succeed. If you choose an advanced game or activity, think of ways to make it doable for your grandchildren. They will feel proud of themselves when they succeed.
- Encourage your grandchildren while you play. Aim to praise the process (“You really thought about your answers”) rather than talent (“You’re a genius”) or results (“You colored in the lines perfectly”).
- End with reflection. Wrap up playtime by asking your grandchildren what they learned or how they felt and ask them to share something they remember about the High Holidays.

Discussion Questions

1. Share a favorite memory of playing with your grandchildren, or a memory you have of playing with your own grandparents. How did it help strengthen your relationship or teach something valuable?
2. What is the value of introducing High Holiday themes like forgiveness, reflection, and self-improvement through play?
3. What are the benefits you experience when incorporating play into interactions with your grandchildren? What are the challenges?
4. How can you adapt play for different ages, abilities, and energy levels?
5. Share games or activities that have resonated most with your grandchildren.
6. How can you gently challenge your grandchildren through play, and what kind of support, feedback, or observations can you offer to help them succeed?
7. Share an idea you plan to try for High Holidays-based play with your grandkids.