



Mitzvah- Not a Mitzvah

Submitted by: *Caroline Saliman*

Subject Area: Jewish Living and Identity

Target Age Group: Preschool - Kindergarden

Lesson Objective:

The purpose of this game is to reinforce the concept of mitzvah, (or any other Jewish concept as well.)

Game Preparation:

Clear away all tables, chairs, etc. that would be in the way of children running from end to end of the room. Place some sort of signs on opposite ends of the room, designating which side is "mitzvah" and which side is "not a mitzvah". Have all the children stand in the middle of the room to begin.

Playing the Game:

Using a list of appropriate mitzvot for your age group, say it out loud and have the children run to whichever end of the room they think is the correct side. For example, the teacher might say, "taking care of pets." The children would all run to the mitzvah side. The teacher might then say, "drawing on the tables", and then the children will hopefully run to the other- not a mitzvah side. It is helpful to begin each little scenario by saying, "Mitzvah, not a mitzvah" while pointing to the corresponding side, as a reminder to which side is which. After several of these, the children then might become more involved by coming up with their own scenarios for each other. It has also happened where children, even at five years old have disagreed and had valid reasons why they believed one way or another, leading to some wonderful discussion of mitzvot, even at a preschool level. The game continues for as long as there is interest.



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Other Variations of Mitzvah - Not a Mitzvah:

The same physical idea of the game remains, but the content is changed and also the ages can change. Some other variations that might be more appropriate for older than preschool aged children in addition to "Mitzvah - Not a Mitzvah" are as follows:

"Kosher - Treyf"

"In the Torah- not in the Torah": names and events that are/are not part of the Torah.

"Jewish - Not Jewish": assorted celebrities, historical figures, fictional characters (this is a fun variation to play at Hebrew School parties.)

Any other assorted variations work well with this set up. The physical aspect of the game is appealing for the students, and it also is a game that children who are not as comfortable verbalizing answers in class are more comfortable playing.

Why Play "Mitzvah - Not a Mitzvah"?

This game gets children thinking about certain concepts in Judaism, yet makes it very entertaining. Great discussions are a natural result of the game. (Depending on the question of course - but even the question of "Madonna: Jewish or not Jewish" has proved to be an interesting and entertaining discussion with sixth graders!)