



Grab 'n' Go Lesson MITZVAH CIRCLE FOUNDATION

Good People Grab 'n' Go Lessons are designed to provide educators with all of the education materials needed in one document to teach a 60-90 minute lesson on a specific topic. Some Grab 'n' Go Lessons will require photo copies while others will require internet access and a projector and speakers; some will require markers while others will require post-it notes each one is unique. We encourage educators to adapt the materials to their environment and learners. (Note: All stock graphics are free on <http://www.freedigitalphotos.net>)

SUPPLIES: play money (i.e. Monopoly™) in envelopes (10 of \$1 bills per person); items for a school store, obstacle course items; Fran Held Good Person Profile copies; internet access/computers; text study sheets

12-18 minutes

Arrival Activity:

1. As each person comes in, they are given an envelope with play money of \$10 in \$1 bills and a "school supply" list:
 - 1 Marker Pack
 - 5 Pencils
 - 1 Scissors
 - 2 Glue Sticks
 - 3 Notebooks
 - 1 Pack of Loose Leaf Paper
 - 5 folders
 - 1 Eraser
 - 1 Calculator
2. Have the room set up like a mini-store of school supplies with fake price tags near each pile of items [NOTE: if you don't have the actual items, make index cards with photos of items] (marker packs - \$3, pencils - 5/\$1, pens - \$1, scissors - \$3, glue sticks - \$2, rulers - \$2, notebooks - \$3, loose leaf paper packs - \$2, folders - \$1, erasers - \$1, calculators - \$5, backpack - \$15).
3. As people come through, they have to have to choose how to prioritize their money and what to buy from the store.
4. Then, they have to navigate a mini-obstacle course carrying their items (works best if they have real items and not the cards)
5. Some ideas for your obstacle course:
 - Around a desk
 - Up and over a step stool
 - Through a hoola-hoop
 - Weaving between cones

6. When they are through the course, they have to go back and put their “shopping” items back.
7. Discuss:
 - How did you decide what to buy from the store and what you couldn’t get on your list?
 - Was it easy or difficult to carry all your items and maneuver through the obstacle course?
 - Why did you think we had you do the obstacle challenge (people who don’t have a backpack, if they can somehow get these items – which isn’t always easy – don’t have anything to carry them in when they walk to/from school)

5-7 minutes Set Induction

1. Share: As many of us get ready to go back to school for the year, we start by getting our school supply shopping list.
2. Ask: What else do we often do to prepare for going back to school (new backpack, new shoes, new clothing, doctor appointment, stock up on school lunch supplies, etc)?
3. Explain: When we think about people who can’t afford school supplies or a backpack, we know they often can’t afford other things (like new clothing, new shoes, lunch box items, etc).
4. Explain: Today we are going to learn about a special woman – Fran Held, who problem-solves so that needy people can get access to these basic items and start their new school year off right.

8-12 minutes The Good Person Profile: Fran Held

Read aloud Fran’s story or copy and distribute to participants (handout for copying at end of lesson)

If you ask **Fran Held** what makes for a really good day she will respond:

Each day is a gift and in that gift we are given the opportunity to create a better world. Today I told a woman who owns no shoes that she would not have to wear flip-flops this winter because we are giving her shoes. I had the privilege to tell a single mom who is HIV positive that we would provide back to school clothing and supplies [for her children] so she had one less thing to worry about. I also talked to a second grader who called because her mom does not speak English and they need blankets and household items because they live in an empty apartment. This was the first hour of my day and I am grateful for every minute of it.



What makes Fran's comments even more profound is that, though the details may differ, this is a typical day. For people who have suddenly found themselves without hope and living without some of life's most basic needs, which the rest of us take for granted, Fran and The Mitzvah Circle Foundation which she started in 2009, are a source of comfort.

A chance visit to her local supermarket back in 1999 led Fran into a world she never imagined. While in the bakery department she watched the manager toss a perfectly beautiful sheet cake into the garbage because of a crack in the icing. How could this happen? There were so many hungry people close by. When the manager admitted that they routinely tossed leftovers at the close of business each and every day Fran was stunned and asked if the store would donate the day's leftovers provided volunteers arrived each day to pick them up. With an agreement in place, Fran quickly organized a group who ran daily pick-ups and delivered to local shelters and pantries.

Today Fran's passion to help people living "on the edge" includes other programs made possible by a large contingent of volunteers representing many different segments of the larger community. Each program, whether it addresses homelessness, hunger, illness, individuals in crisis, or the need for school supplies and diapers, is facilitated with a deeply personal and compassionate focus. New underwear or a winter hat is important. Receiving those items with a large dose of love, compassion and hope is just as important.

Helping people was always in Fran's DNA. It's just who she is.

Discuss:

- Why do you think Fran says that each day is a gift?
- What are some basic needs Fran and Mitzvah Circle Foundation help people gain access to?
- How does helping a child also help their parent(s) or guardian(s)?
- What do you think was Fran's core motivation for starting Mitzvah Circle Foundation?
- Is it enough that someone receives an item from a charity? Or does receiving them from someone who adds in some "love" make a difference?

7-15 minutes Getting to Know Mitzvah Circle Foundation

Watch these videos:

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvyD2hmSSGc> (3:13) - have the participants make notes about all the items they saw in the video
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBMF2NMNre0> (4:55) – have the participants write down 5 facts that Fran said in the video

View this Impact Graphic: <http://mitzvahcircle.org/2015-impact.php>

Browse their Instagram photos: <https://www.instagram.com/mitzvahcircle/>

Read this article: <http://www.innovairre.com/a-humbling-inspiring-volunteer-experience-with-mitzvah-circle/>

If you have access to multiple computers, cell phones or tablets and enough internet bandwidth, you can have individuals in the group do some research about Mitzvah Circle Foundation by looking at these references:

- Website: <http://mitzvahcircle.org/>
- Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/MitzvahCircle/>

Discuss:

- Look up how much a box of diapers costs (average is 200 diapers for \$45). Now divide the number of diapers Fran said in the video or on the Impact Graphic and multiply by \$45 ... how much money in diapers did Mitzvah Circle give out?
- Who can get involved in helping Mitzvah Circle Foundation take action?
- What other challenges do you think the families needing Mitzvah Circle Foundation assistance face every day?

15-25 minutes What's Jewish About Fran and her work?

Included in this Grab 'n' Go is a Jewish Text Study sheet for your use. Depending on the age of your participants, you may want to choose one Jewish text to explore via a projector, a few values via posters, or provide them with the entire text sheet. For advanced learners, you may want to provide them a *Tanakh* for access to some of the original texts.

One method for engaging these texts:

1. Many of the texts use the words "poor" or "needy." Pull those texts out from the rest and have the learners read carefully through them.
2. Ask: Why would so many Jewish texts focus on these words and descriptors?
3. Have the learners try and assess – using these texts, how do we determine who is "poor" or "needy"?
4. Have them research in their community what the official poverty line is and how many people in their community live under the poverty line.
5. Using these texts, make a list of things they are supposed to do in order to support those in the community living in these conditions.

Some questions for consideration:

- These texts collectively create a sense of urgency about helping the poor – why do you think that is?
- A few of the texts go beyond indicating a need for us to care for basic needs (household goods, etc) – how do those texts and the text of Pirkei Avot 2:10 work together?
- In what ways does Fran and the team at Mitzvah Circle Foundation increase dignity in those they serve?
- The plight of the Jews in Egypt serves as basis for many of these commandments “for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Why do you think this biblical story is tied to our commandments to care for others?
- Several of the texts refer to God/Adonai/the Lord caring for those who care for others. Do you think this “payback” is why people should give? Do you think this “payback” is in this life or in the “World to Come?” Do you agree that people who care for others are then taken care of by God?

4-8 minutes **The Good People Making a Difference with Mitzvah Circle Foundation**

What I find stunning is that we live in a country where individuals, families, schools and sometimes entire communities are in desperate need of items that most people consider basic. . . It is heartbreaking.

Fran Held, founder of Mitzvah Circle Foundation, wrote these words some time ago. How many things do we all take for granted? What simple, basic items do we assume that everyone has? A pencil for school work? Soap, toothpaste or a toothbrush to start the day? As Fran notes, there are far too many people in our country—a land of abundance and extremes—who do not have these simple items readily available. This inequity drives Fran, each and every day, to set things right.

Today, Fran’s passion to help people living “on the edge” includes numerous other programs made possible by a large contingent of local volunteers who represent many different segments of the larger community. Each program, whether it addresses the needs of homeless people, those with insufficient food, individuals in crisis or those dealing with serious illness, a diaper bank or school supplies for children from families that cannot afford the materials needed for effective learning, is facilitated with a deeply personal and compassionate focus.

This program is maintained on a shoe-string budget with low administrative costs and (mostly) gifts-in-kind. The Good People Fund has offered funding which allowed Fran to purchase new computers and updated software (she had been using donated out-of-date machines), a copy machine, telephone system, additional materials (tables, chairs, telephone) for her donated warehouse space as well as a fund for emergency client needs as they arise. Our belief in Fran’s efforts to heal the entire “soul” is reflected in the grants we have given to underwrite the purchase of diapers for her Diaper Bank, the extra administrative help she has brought on to manage the organization’s expansion and, finally, the internship program which attracts many college students seeking careers in social services. The lessons they have learned under Fran’s tutelage will be with them forever.

Mitzvah Circle Foundation’s Program Profile on our website:

<https://www.goodpeoplefund.org/program/mitzvah-circle-foundation/>

Getting to Good

Depending on the time you have, this can either be a short conversation about some options to get involved or can be a hands-on project adjusted to your needs. Here are some hands-on ideas:

- Check out the Classroom4Good website created by The Mitzvah Circle Foundation: <http://classroom4good.org/>. Your classroom can adopt any number of these projects and create a long-term partnership with Mitzvah Circle Foundation. If you live outside of Philadelphia where Mitzvah Circle Foundation is located, discuss with them ways you can partner from afar.
- Have your participants research your state's rulings for using WIC/SNAP on items like diapers. If they are not covered, arrange to meet with a state legislator (in person or over Skype) to lobby them to cover these items.
- Conduct a collection drive focused on any one of these items: diapers, school supplies, gently-used shoes, backpacks, etc. If you don't want to ship them to Mitzvah Circle Foundation, find a local donation center in your community to partner with.
- Have your participants contact local stores (Target, Walmart, K-Mart, Kohls, etc) and ask them to donate end-of-season backpacks which your group can then fill with collected school supplies. Donate to a local low-income school to give to their students.
- Have your participants create snack bags decorated with inspirational messages. Find a homeless/street outreach program to partner with for delivery.

Your group's *tzedakah* donations can be contributed to The Good People Fund and earmarked for our work with Mitzvah Circle Foundation <https://www.goodpeoplefund.org/mitzvah-donate/>.

Why donate to The Good People Fund to distribute your *tzedakah*?

Shulhan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah 249:6

One able to motivate others to contribute, receives greater reward than the giver.

Shulhan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 249:7

A person should not contribute to a *tzedakah* fund unless he knows that its management is reliable.

Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah 256:1

Every Jewish community is obliged to appoint charity administrators, respected and reliable individuals who will collect from each person what they are able to contribute...and give to each poor person sufficient for their needs for the week.

Mishnah Peah 8:7

A public fund needs to be collected by no less than two people, and distributed by no less than three people.

For a copy of our Annual Report, visit: https://is.gd/GPF_AnnualReport2015



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Text Resources

Deuteronomy 10:18-19

[God] upholds the cause of the orphan and the widow, and befriends the stranger, providing him/her with food and clothing. -- You too must befriend the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Pirkei Avot 2:10

Your friend's dignity should be as precious to you as your own.

Job 29:12-17

For I saved the poor who cried out, the orphan who had none to help. I received the blessing of the lost; I gladdened the heart of the widow. I clothed myself in righteousness and it robed me; justice was my cloak and turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a parent to the needy, and I looked into the case of the stranger. I broke the jaws of the wrongdoer, and I wrested prey from the wrongdoer's teeth.

Leviticus 25:35

And if your fellow becomes poor and their means fail with you, then you shall strengthen your fellow, whether a stranger or a settler...

Proverbs 19:17

One who is generous to the poor makes a loan to the Lord; God will repay that person their due.

Psalms 112:9

[The beneficent person] gives freely to the poor; that person's beneficence lasts, and lasts, and their strength is exalted in honor.

Psalms 41:2

Happy is he who considers the poor; Adonai will deliver him

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 7:1

It is a positive commandment to give charity to the poor, as is appropriate to the poor person, providing the giver can afford it, as it says, "You shall open your hand to the poor," and "You shall strengthen the stranger who dwells with you," and "Your fellow shall live with you."

Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Laws of Gifts to the Poor 7:3

You are commanded to provide the needy with whatever they lack. If they lack clothing, you must clothe them. If they lack household goods, you must provide them...You are commanded to fulfill all their needs, though not required to make them wealthy.

(turn over)



Proverbs 3:28

Do not say to your fellow, 'Go and return, and tomorrow I will give'"

Deuteronomy 15:7-11

If, however, there is a needy person among you, one of your kin in any of your settlements in the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not harden your heart and shut your hand against your needy kin. Rather, you must open your hand and lend them sufficient for whatever they need.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better off than one, in that they have greater benefit from their earnings. For should they fall, one can raise the other; but woe betide one who is alone and falls with no companion to raise them!

Exodus 3:7

And God continued, "I have marked well the impoverishment of My people in Egypt and have heeded their outcry because of their taskmasters; yes, I am mindful of their sufferings."

The Good Person Profile FRAN HELD



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(Above) Fran celebrates accomplishments with some volunteers.



(Left) A volunteer sorting donated school supplies.

(Photos from Mitzvah Circle Foundation Instagram)