

Guide for using this handout:

Notes for parents appear in gray boxes like this one. These notes are intended to help guide the conversation with your children.

Halachot and Torah sources appear in boxes like this one, written in plain English. Read these out loud and explain when necessary.

Points for discussion are written in this format, with no border or box.

When you reach a line like this,
stop and wait for the next section to be introduced.

INTRODUCTION TO SHMIRAT HALASHON

Before we begin, ask your children if they know what Lashon Hara is. Have them share their definition of it. Then read this first section with them and discuss until we move to the next section.

The Chafetz Chaim, in his sefer *Shmiras Halashon*, teaches that if we want to stop speaking lashon hara, it's not enough to just decide to stop. What we really need to do is set aside time to learn the halachot of lashon hara on a regular basis.

But the Chafetz Chaim also says that learning the halachot of lashon hara only helps you if, while studying, you accept that you will make an effort to follow the halachot you are learning.

Discuss this: Why do we need to decide not to speak lashon hara AND devote time to learning the halachot? Why wouldn't just one of these be enough?

Pause here...

HALACHA:

There are two basic categories of lashon hara:

- 1) Damaging statements: saying something that could cause a person distress, fear, physical harm, or financial loss (even if it is not derogatory.)
- 2) Derogatory statements: saying something negative about a fellow Jew (even if one knows that no harm or defamation will result.)

NOTE: Most statements that are considered lashon hara are both damaging and derogatory.

Word of the day: **derogatory**. Make sure everyone knows what it means!

Pause here...

HALACHA:

A statement that can cause damage to a person is considered lashon hara even if it is not the least bit derogatory.

Discuss This:

- Is it possible to say something about someone that is not at all negative, but it can still cause them harm?
- Is it possible to say something about someone that is actually really nice, but it can still cause them harm?

Pause here...

Discuss This:

Are the underlined quotes in these situations examples of the halacha above? Why or why not?

1. Stanley is the biggest, toughest kid in the 4th grade. He's always been bigger and stronger than everyone in the class, which is why they've called him "Manly Stanley" since kindergarten. Stanley also has a little bit of a temper, and gets angry pretty easily. One morning, a few minutes before school started, Binny, the smallest kid in the class ("Mini Binny") was the first to arrive in the classroom. As he walked toward his desk, he accidentally bumped into Stanley's desk and knocked everything out of it onto the floor. Lucky for Binny, no one was in the room yet, so he rushed back out to the hall, pretending nothing had happened. The last thing he wanted was for Manly Stanley to be angry at him! But as it turned out, someone did see what happened; Charlie had been walking past the door just as Binny was knocking over Stanley's desk. As Binny guessed, Stanley was really angry when he saw the mess he had to clean up when he got to class! Charlie didn't say anything about it until just before recess when he told Stanley, "Binny is so clumsy! He's the one who knocked your desk over."
2. What if the story of Stanley's knocked-over desk was a little different? What if Stanley already knows that Binny was the one who knocked over his desk? Binny does his best to avoid Stanley, hoping to give him time to get over his anger. "Hey Stanley," Charlie says later that day, "I just saw Binny go into the boys' bathroom on the second floor."

Pause here...

Continue discussing:

3. Forgetful Freddy has a reputation for borrowing money from people and "forgetting" to pay it back. One day, you and your friends are at 7-11 getting Slurpees, and Freddy asks if he can borrow a few dollars.

“I only have enough to pay for my own Slurpee,” you reply, “but I heard Richie say that he brought \$20 with him today. Ask him.”

4. Sarah and her friends are playing football outside as Sarah’s neighbor, Mrs. Cohen, arrives home from the grocery store. Mrs. Cohen gets out of her car and is about to carry the groceries into the house when she stops to speak to the girls. “You girls really like football, don’t you?” she asks. Sarah responds: “We sure do! And you should see Laurie throw the ball! She’s definitely the strongest of all of us!”

Pause here...

HALACHA:

A statement that is derogatory is considered lashon hara, even if it is not damaging.

Discuss This:

- Is it possible to say something about someone that is derogatory, but it does not cause them harm?

Pause here...

Discuss This:

Are the underlined quotes in these situations examples of the halacha above? Why or why not?

1. As the family is heading home from the show at school, Mordechai’s father says, “Mordechai, that was a beautiful choir performance your class put on!” Mordechai replies: “Thanks! It was really hard for me to get all of the songs right because Shlomo, the kid next to me, was totally off key the entire time!”

2. As the family is heading home from the show at school, Mordechai's father says, "Mordechai, that was a beautiful choir performance your class put on!" Mordechai replies: "Thanks! It was really hard for us to get all of the songs right because the music teacher, Mr. Schwartz, kept forgetting to bring the song sheets to rehearsal!"

Stop here.
