



**TEACHING GUIDE**



# **A KID'S MENSCH HANDBOOK**

**Step by Step to a Lifetime  
of Jewish Values**



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**Part One**

**The Mensch  
Basics**

## Chapter 1

# Welcome to A Kid's Mensch Handbook

Student text:  
pages 8–13

## Overview

Chapter 1 introduces the book's theme: Like a stone dropped into a still lake, our actions affect the world around us. A mensch is someone who takes action and affects the world in positive ways. Chapter 1 also outlines the book's content and structure.

## Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Describe how our actions “ripple out” and affect others.
- Define “mensch” and articulate qualities that characterize a mensch.
- Explain the book's contents and basic structure.

## Vocabulary

**mensch** “person”; someone of integrity and respect

## Set Induction

Have your students brainstorm a list of qualities that describe a good person. Write the list on the board. Start the exercise by writing *kindness, honesty, and respect*.

Ask each student to choose the three qualities he or she considers most important. Invite volunteers to share their choices, including reasons why they consider their qualities important.

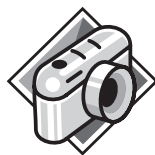
## Making Waves (pages 9–10)

Have volunteers read the two paragraphs on page 9. Ask: What are some examples of actions that affect others? You may wish to have students share examples of the ways they have affected others positively and explain what they learned from the experience.



## Expand the Conversation

Have a student read the “Quick Quote” on page 9 aloud. Ask: What is the difference between wisdom and kindness? (*Wisdom has to do with knowledge and judgment; kindness has to do with action.*)



## Photo Op

Point to the photo of the ripple on page 9. Have a student read the legend around the ripple (“The Stone,” “Your Family,” etc.). Explain that we’ll see this image recur throughout *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* as a reminder that like a stone on a lake, our actions affect the world around us.



## Family Worksheet 1

# Too Many to Menschen: Family Version

Dear Parent:

This year, we will be studying Jewish values with our new textbook, *A Kid's Mensch Handbook*. Periodically we will send home a Family Worksheet based on lessons from the book for your family to complete together.

This week we learned that a *mensch* is a good person—a person of kindness, integrity, and respect. As a family, think of three people you consider *menschen* (plural of mensch): a family friend or neighbor, a teacher or community leader, and someone who is famous. Write their names on the lines below, then write down the reasons why each one is a mensch.

<b>Names:</b>		
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Friend or Neighbor	Teacher or Community Leader	Someone Who Is Famous
<b>Reasons each one is a mensch:</b>		

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**Tina Finck**



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## **That's Fine and Dandy** (page 10)

Ask a volunteer to read the first paragraph of "That's Fine and Dandy" aloud. Students can alternate reading the bulleted items and then add definitions of their own.

## **Too Many to Menschen** (page 11)

As your students complete this exercise, direct them to include kind and generous *actions* taken by their *menschen*.

Invite the class to share their personal *menschen* with the class.

## **Baby Mensch** (page 12)

Have a volunteer read "Baby Mensch" aloud. Following is the full talmudic legend to share with the class:

While a child is still in its mother's womb, it learns the entire Torah by the light of a special lamp that allows the baby to see everything on earth. When the baby is born, an angel appears and requires the baby to take an oath that he or she will live a life of righteousness. The angel then tweaks the baby's nose, causing it to forget everything it has learned. It then spends its life not learning new information, but "remembering" what it once knew.

Explain that this legend also provides a creative explanation for the furrow beneath our nostrils!



## **As a Family**

Copy and distribute "Family Worksheet 1" found on the following page. Ask students to complete the chart with their families.

During the next class session, have students present their charts to the class. Or, invite your students' parents to class to share the charts as a family. It's a great way to bring your students' families together.

# Scope and Sequence

Each chapter of *A Kid's Mensch Handbook* examines a core concept that serves as the chapter's main theme:

Chapter	Pages	Core Concept
1	8–13	Each of us affects the world in profound ways. A mensch is someone who takes action that is generous and kind, action that affects the world in <i>positive</i> ways.
2	14–23	It is important to make good, ethical choices. Jewish sources, experience, and wisdom can help us to determine and make good choices.
3	24–35	Once we've made good choices, we must take action. An important guide to taking "mensch action" is The Golden Rule: <i>v'ahavta l'reacha kamocha</i> —love your neighbor as yourself.
4	38–49	We respect ourselves because we are created <i>b'tzelem Elohim</i> —in God's image. When we understand how it feels to respect <i>ourselves</i> , we better understand how <i>others</i> feel when we respect them.
5	50–61	We exercise self-respect through <i>sh'mirat habriyut</i> —guarding one's health. By caring for our bodies and our minds, we better prepare ourselves to be <i>menschen</i> to others.
6	64–75	A good way to learn how to treat others respectfully is through <i>talmud Torah</i> —Jewish learning. <i>Talmud Torah</i> may be the most important mitzvah of all, because learning leads to action.
7	76–87	We practice treating others respectfully with the value of <i>sh'lom bayit</i> —peace in the home. Through <i>sh'lom bayit</i> , we learn the qualities of forgiveness, responsibility, and patience.
8	88–99	We learn to treat friends and classmates respectfully with the value of <i>dibbuk haverim</i> —attachment to friends. Through <i>dibbuk haverim</i> , we help one another to be our best selves and reach our greatest potential.
9	100–111	We can show respect for all people through the values of <i>k'vod habriyot</i> —respect for all people; <i>derech eretz</i> —good manners; <i>klal Yisrael</i> —support for the world Jewish community; and <i>tzedakah</i> —righteousness.
Special Sections	112–118	We can review what we've learned with "Mensch Magic," "Mensch Diploma," and the "Handy-Dandy Mensch Index."