



The Jewish Education Project Guide to **Thriving** Selected Resources for Jewish Educators

*These dynamic and changing guides are designed to save you some time and point you towards some of the significant and helpful resources that we find valuable. **We provide this version as a Google Doc so that educators can add it to their Drive, if they want, or make a copy to work with on their own.** If you have resources you'd like to share with us (or other thoughts about this guide), please send them to resourceguides@JewishEdProject.org.*

Framing the Conversation, Essential Questions, and Initial Steps (below) | [From Our Think Tank Thriving and Related Models in Action](#) | [Thriving and Character: Two Kindred Souls](#) | [Thriving, Happiness and Positive Psychology](#) | [Must Visit and See!](#)

Framing the Conversation, Essential Questions, and Initial Steps

- [Cultivating Thriving Lives: A webinar and reading series](#) | Shinui

This webinar and reading series was sponsored by Shinui, the Network for Innovation in Part-Time Education, for its consortium of 10 Jewish Education Agencies. The first session was led by our own David Bryfman. **While there are links to the readings for each session, many of them are already listed in our guide below.**

- Session 1: [Entering a New Paradigm for Jewish Education](#) | [Readings](#) | [Slides](#)
David Bryfman, Ph.D. | The Jewish Education Project | October 2019
- Session 2: [Positive Psychology Meets Jewish Education](#) | [Readings](#) | [Slides](#)
Sarah Rosenblum, MAPP | Positive Psychology Instructor and Consultant | December 2019
- Session 3: [Strength to Strength with VIA Character Strengths](#) | [Readings](#) | [Slides](#)
Dr. Jillian Copley (Darwish) | President & CEO Mayerson Academy | January 2020
- Session 4: [Where Theory Meets Practice](#) | [Readings, Slides & Background Materials](#)
Tess Levine, B'nai Jeshurun & Rachel Happel, Temple Beth Shalom | March 2020

- [Taking the Time and Making the Investment to Thrive](#)

Rabbi Jennifer Goldsmith | March 2018 | JTS Gleanings

How are we helping our learners today draw on their Jewishness to live more meaningful lives? Thriving and positive psychology provides us new vessels to deliver our ancient tradition in a way that will help our learners - indeed, our whole communities - live more fully, meaningfully, and responsibly.





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- [Thriving, Flourishing, Covenantal Community, Intentional Spiritual Communities, and Positive Judaism: How To Lead In An Emergent Movement?](#)

Dr. Bill Robinson | January 9, 2018 | eJewishPhilanthropy

“In Jewish communal life and education, most of us continue to operate out of an overriding concern with surviving: How do we ensure the future of the Jewish people, the survival of our institutions, and the survival of sacred Jewish rituals? However, there is an emerging alternative to this declining ideology of “surviving” that places its faith in the continuing value of Judaism, Jewish community, and Jewish learning to helping people lead thriving lives today.”

- [When You’re Happy and You Know It – The True Purpose of Jewish Education](#)
- [From Continuity, to Renewal and Renaissance, to... Jewish Thriving](#)

Dr. David Bryfman | November 28, 2016 & January 26, 2017 | eJewish Philanthropy & Ayeka

These two articles by David Bryfman, Chief Innovation Officer at The Jewish Education Project, serve as a Part I and Part II to the framing of Thriving. Part I set the stage for our [Jewish Futures Conference on Happiness](#), and Part II offers a vision and a blueprint for how Thriving, as a paradigm shift, can and should impact Jewish education and the larger Jewish community, as a whole.

- [Launching the Third Stage of Jewish Education](#)

Aryeh Ben David | February 12, 2015 | Times of Israel

“Jewish education has experienced two distinct stages during the last 40 years: educating for content, then educating for the sake of connection. We are now ready for the third phase: educating for life.”

From our Think Tank

“How can Judaism help us thrive?” is a question we have asked participants in a Think Tank on Thriving to tackle. Part of a national initiative with incredible thought leaders and Jewish educators from across the spectrum of Jewish life, the Think Tank was created and led by The Jewish Education Project through the generous funding of the Jim Joseph Foundation.

- [A Living, Thriving Judaism: How Our Personal and Global Impact Starts at Home](#)

Sarah Alevsky | August 14, 2018 | Chabad Lubavitch World HQ / News

“I come to this by way of working on the Upper West Side with our Chabad Family Programs to create programs and experiences for children and their families that convey the joy, life, and meaning that Torah and Mitzvot can inform our lives. In the process, we create community. At our first meeting as part of the think tank, we spent a day in discussion around two questions: How does Judaism help us thrive? and how can we make Judaism thrive? Both of these questions are interconnected in profound ways, and reflect the need to focus on the particular/personal and the global/communal aspects of our lives.”





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- [Positive Narrative: The Shift in Tablets and Positive Psychology](#)

Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow | August 3, 2018 | Said to Myself (A Professional/Personal Blog)

“...I was moved thinking about how much of the shift from a pathology to a strength-based approach is actually determined by your fundamental understanding of the human condition. Our primary myth of who we are as people might itself set limits to our imagination and capacity to flourish and be successful. Since that time I have been giving a lot of thought to the stories we decide to tell that might help us flourish.

Thriving and Related Models in Action

- More articles from [JTS Gleanings: Vol 5 Issue I - Jewish Education to Help Us Thrive:](#)

- [Values in Action and Vice Versa](#)

Dr. Jeffrey S. Kreiss | March 2018 | JTS Gleanings

There is no shortage of terms for education in the intra- and interpersonal domains: *Character education; moral education; education for ethics; whole child; social-emotional learning (SEL); values or middot; identity; meaning and purpose; spiritual development; positive psychology and thriving.* While there is a place for delving into differences, I suggest that there are areas in which these approaches intersect in ways that either reinforce or complement one another.

- [Modeling and Learning Thriving through Civic Engagement](#)

Dr. Meredith Katz | March 2018 | JTS Gleanings

In addition to building connections with Jewish texts, values, and rituals, engaging as a Jew must include interacting with the others with whom we live on equal terms. This approach builds on a commitment to *tikkun olam* that often frames the interaction on unequal terms: Jews giving the help to those “others” receiving it. How can we envision a more expansive type of thriving, especially in the short term, while we have students in our programs? How can Jewish students, in all their various educational settings, thrive both in the Jewish community and in broader society?

- [Care of Souls](#)

Angie Thurston, Casper ter Kuile, Rev. Sue Phillips | March 2018

“America needs to care for its soul.” This is the provocative conclusion of a new report from Harvard Divinity School Ministry Innovation Fellows, which recommends a course of action to relieve the nation’s soul sickness and lists the “jobs to be done” by a new generation of community and spiritual leaders.





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- **[The Need for Social Emotional Learning in Jewish Education](#)**

[Nancy Parks](#), Educational Consultant and founder of [JTeachNOW](#) | eJewish Philanthropy | Aug 2018

“For many administrators and educators in Jewish private and synagogue schools, however, the political climate and rhetoric of the past two years have posed an interesting and challenging conversation around curricula. Understanding that education in any realm cannot be separated from its context, more and more discussion has centered around character and moral education and social and emotional learning.” Be sure to check out [Nancy’s Eli Talk](#).

- **Thriving and Character: Two Kindred Souls**

- **[Jewish Values in Action: How Youth Professionals Help Teens Thrive](#)**

[Dana Sheanin](#) | September 4, 2018 | eJewishPhilanthropy

Jewish values must be central to our work. Senior leaders in the community must care as much about a youth advisor, rabbi or camp counselor’s understanding of Jewish ritual and text as we do about their ability to plan a program or recruit uninvolved teens. We must deepen their ability to understand gender or sexual identity, politics and power through a Jewish lens even as we teach them how to help teens develop leadership skills.

- **[Jewish Ritual Can Help Us Bridge the Character Gap](#)**

[Geoff Mitelman](#) | January 18, 2018 | MyJewishLearning.com

With the growth of #MeToo and deeper conversations about how we act and speak ethically in general, the question of character has once again become a critical question for us. How good are we? And how do we become better?

- **[The Job of Making Mensches: Campers with Integrity and Honor](#)**

[Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow](#) | September 2017 | American Camp Association

Early on in this work I realized that “making mensches” is just too big of an idea. It was necessary to break it into component parts to make it more manageable and more teachable. It would also help if we had a scheme to classify all of these subordinate parts. I found this much-needed taxonomy in the brilliant work of psychologist and educator Martin Seligman. Then I discovered the work of filmmaker Tiffany Shlain. She has done amazing work bringing the “Science of Character” (Shlain, 2013) to the public, both in a short film called *Making of a Mensch* (2015) and in supporting materials, such as a visually stunning Periodic Table of Character Strengths. Shlain took Seligman’s work and made it accessible to the masses.





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Thriving, Happiness and Positive Psychology

- [What Exactly Do We Mean by “Happiness”?](#)

Michelle Shapiro Abraham | April 21, 2017 | eJewishPhilanthropy

While in vernacular the term “happiness” might have a shallow and trivial connotation, when we talk about “happiness” as a new thrust for Jewish education, we are not talking about a superficial and fleeting feeling, but a deep and connected awareness of ourselves and everyone around us.

- [Yale’s Most Popular Class Ever: Happiness](#)

David Shimer | January 26, 2018 | New York Times

Yale students have long requested that the university offer a course on positive psychology. In January 2018, a quarter of the student body registered for a new course: Psychology and the Good Life, which focuses both on positive positive psychology - the characteristics that allow humans to flourish - and behavioral change, or how to live by those lessons in real life.

- [Positive Judaism Answers the Question: Why Be Jewish?](#)

Rabbi Darren Levine | January 23, 2018 | Beliefnet

Positive Psychology is pro-religion and acknowledges the added value of cultural affiliation and the spiritual life in a person’s overall health. Now, enter Positive Judaism: a framework that approaches Judaism with the human science of well-being at its core.

- [Studying Happiness - Judaism Unbound Podcast - Episode 102](#)

Tal Ben-Shahar with Dan Libenson and Lex Rofes | January 26, 2018 | Judaism Unbound

Tal Ben-Shahar, a lecturer and writer who specializes in the field of Positive Psychology, describes what “studying happiness” looks like in practice, identifies some of the field’s key findings, and explores how religion (Judaism in particular) intersect with academic research on meaning, purpose, and human flourishing.

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Must Visit and See!

- [The VIA Institute on Character](#)

Be sure to take the free VIA Institute Character Strengths Survey.

- [The Making of a Mensch](#) from Let it Ripple Films

This 10 min film and accompanying discussion kit explore character education through the wonderful ancient Jewish teachings of Mussar. Created by Tiffany Shlain and the incredible team at Let it Ripple, this site has online discussion materials, additional videos, and information about Character Day. You can also view their earlier film called [The Science of Character](#).

- [Making Menches: A Periodic Table](#) from the Foundation for Jewish Camp

Inspired by Tiffany Shlain's "Periodic Table of Character Strengths," referenced above in "The Making of a Mensch," this powerful and well-resourced interactive table allows you to explore each "middah" or Mussar quality along with related programs, media, and texts when available. Although designed with camp settings in mind, most of the materials are appropriate or adaptable for most educational settings.

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