

Tzelem for LGBTQ+ Session 1

 curriculum.movingtraditions.org/tzelem-for-lgbtq-session-1



Objectives

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Understand the purpose of Tzelem LGBTQ+ and coming together
- Get to know each other individually and as a group
- Understand expectations and hopes for the year
- Understand Jewish naming and the connection to the LGBTQ+ experience

Materials:

- Stopwatch: <https://www.online-stopwatch.com/eggtimer-countdown/full-screen/>
- Google doc to write group norms/ground rules, or polleverywhere.com
- Whiteboard

- [Futureme.org](https://futureme.org) for letter writing
- Candle (and match) that can stand on its own in front of the camera as you speak

1. Welcome and Introductory Activity (20 minutes)

Take a few minutes to introduce yourself (name, pronouns) and why you are excited about leading this Tzelem group. Here is an example of what you might say:

Welcome everyone! My name is ____ and my pronouns are ____/____/____. I'm really excited to see you all and to get started with our Tzelem group. [insert one to two sentences about why you're excited about the group]. I'll be the facilitator of this group all year, which means I'll be at all the meetings and will help us get the most out of our time together. It also means I'll be in touch with you and your family in between meetings and am available to answer any questions or concerns you have. Today we'll get to know each other a bit and brainstorm about what we want this group to look like over the year. But first, we're going to play some games to get our bodies moving on our screens.

SAY:

I want us to get to know each other, and what better way to do that than showing us things that are in your room. I am going to give you a prompt, set a timer for 30 seconds, and I want you to look around the room that you are in and grab an object related to that prompt. I will then ask everyone to hold up their item to the camera and I will choose one (or two) participants to introduce themselves, share their item and why it is important to them. When introducing yourself please share your name, pronouns, [hometown] and your object. The way that you introduce yourself may change from meeting to meeting. So do not feel like anything you share today is permanent. There is a lot of room for change and experimentation in Tzelem.

Facilitator's Tip: After you share the prompt, share your screen with the stopwatch set to 30 seconds. If everyone is back before 30 seconds is over, unshare your screen and continue with introductions. Paste the introduction instructions in the chat. By the end of the activity, make sure that everyone has introduced themselves and speaks about their item.

Prompts

- A rainbow-like item
- A summer object
- Something Jewish
- Something that represents you

2. Norms/Ground Rules (20 minutes)

SAY:

In order to get the most out of this group, it will be helpful create a list of expectations/ground rules we all agree to. Let's brainstorm together what these could be.

Facilitator's Tip: If the group needs prompting, consider: what do you need from your peers to feel safe in this group? What do you need in order to participate fully? What can you promise to other members? What do you expect from the facilitator?

We recommend that you, the facilitator, take notes on a Google Doc that can be shared once this activity is over. Do not share your screen of it during the activity so that everyone can see each other. Instead, share the doc in the chat afterwards as well as in your follow up email. Invite participants to sign the agreement by typing their initials at the bottom of the document. Participants may not feel comfortable sharing out loud, so invite them to say their guidelines out loud, type in the chat to everyone, or chat to you so they can be anonymous.

If not brought up by participants, make sure to include:

- Reasonable confidentiality. What we talk about in the group stays in the group. Exception: mandated reporting around harming self or others.
- Challenge the idea, not the person.
- Step up, step back. This asks that participants who find themselves speaking more during sessions step back and allow the quieter ones to share. It also asks participants who find themselves quiet and not speaking as often to be brave and step up to share so that all voices are heard and valued.
- Cell phone policy/computer distraction. Ask teens to define this policy because their buy-in is crucial to them abiding by it (and all guidelines!).
- Assume best intentions while understanding impact.
- Respect and Acceptance.
- It's okay to not contribute.
- Create a word or a phrase if the group gets out of hand and everyone is talking over each other.

SAY:

One of the hopes for this group is that you'll each feel that you can bring your full selves here. However, many of us on this screen may have been taught not to do this — that there is a part of who we are that is unacceptable. Even if we weren't explicitly taught this, we may sometimes feel it, because it is all around us in our culture. There have been many words used historically to describe those who express their love physically with same-gender partners and many words also used to talk about people who are not gender normative. Sometimes these are even the same words.

Pull up a pre-prepared white board with a line drawn down the middle with the words *Like* and *Don't Like* on either side. Explain how to annotate on the whiteboard and ask teens to write responses to the following prompt. The other option is to create two polleverywhere.com to make a word cloud of responses. We encourage you to take a screen shot of responses before closing it — you can share this with your participants in your follow up email or keep it for yourself!

Whiteboard Prompt:

What are words you like and words you don't like to describe non-binary gender identities and/or sexual orientations other than heterosexual?

Facilitator's Tip: After participants respond to the whiteboard prompt, consider asking them: How do you feel about the words "queer" or "genderqueer?"

It may also be relevant to share some of the following: "Homosexual" is a clinical word introduced in the 19th century and focuses only on sexual behavior. "Gay" was used as slang since the 1920's but became more popular among activists of the 60's who used it to talk about a person's identity – not just their actions. "Lesbian" is a reference to the island of Lesbos, home to the Ancient Greek poet, Sappho, a woman who loved women. And of course, there are many demeaning words in use today.

Since at least 1990 when Queer Nation was founded, some members of our community have reclaimed the word queer and more recently genderqueer for a number of reasons — among them pride in difference and the desire to be inclusive of women, men, transgender and non-binary people.

SAY:

In Jewish tradition, there is a lot of recognition given to the power of names and self-naming. For instance, in the Torah, the name for the Children of Israel comes about through a dramatic story of Jacob wrestling with an angel alone in the middle of the night. The name, "Israel" has been interpreted as "the people who wrestle with God."

ASK:

- How, if at all, do you think this story of achieving a name through wrestling is relevant for the experience of LGBTQ/non-binary people? (possible response: LGBTQ/non-binary people may be in a process of finding the right name for themselves – both in terms of an individual name and as an identity)
- When in your life have you felt pride in being different (when it comes to all of your identities) and when have you felt included and part of a community? (You might have participants reflect independently on this question)

3. From Your Older Self (10 minutes)

SAY:

Older folks often think back to their teenage years and consider how they would do things differently. Maybe you look back now to middle or elementary school years with that thought. While we can't change the past, I'd like to share a clip to show how you aren't alone in your process. It's important to also remember that this group is one (or maybe your only) support system and that we are here to lift you up and cheer you on!

Two clip choices:

Post-college students talk about their coming out stories

https://youtu.be/lhkuYGZyp_o



[Watch Video At:](#)

https://youtu.be/lhkuYGZyp_o

OR show this clip:

Queer Eye cast gives advice to their younger self

0:00-2:38

https://youtu.be/u9a1bvk2_Z



Watch Video At:

https://youtu.be/u9a1bvk2_Zc

ASK:

- What, if anything from the video(s), resonated with you?
- What, if anything, really didn't resonate with you?

Optional activity- Letter Writing Activity

If there is not enough time to do this activity, it should be shared during this gathering and completed before the next gathering. Send a reminder to participants in two weeks and a week before the second gathering.

Participants will write a letter to themselves at the end of the year OR write a letter to their past self. Share the website futureme.org for them to write themselves a letter and ask them to set the return date for June 1 of the following year.

4. Blessing for the Full Rainbow of Our Community / Closing (10 minutes)

SAY:

It is a custom of many families before the Kiddush at the Shabbat table to offer a blessing for the children. Let's offer a blessing for everyone who is here, for other Jewish Queer teens, and for everyone else, to spread the idea of love and community.

Invite everyone to look at the candle flame that you lit in front of the camera.

SAY:

When you look directly into the flame, notice how the colors of the rainbow shine through the light. Notice also how the flame's shape and colors reflected within are constantly changing and evolving as the fire remains anchored at the wick. Let's take some time to give thanks for all the colors in the flame that are ours. The colors might represent identities, interests, desires, goals, or something else. Let's also give thanks for those colors we love and those that we aren't so comfortable with, within ourselves and others. All of these colors are a part of the light we are all bathed in, all of them are part of the ways in which we are constantly changing. And as we change, just like the flame is anchored by the wick, we thrive when we are connected supportive people and communities in our lives. I hope that one of these anchoring communities for you will be this Tzelem group.

Each teen will take a turn blessing the others in the group

May you be blessed with the blessings of the light of our ancestors, and may you find the courage to bring all the colors of your own light out into the world.

Optional Hebrew Blessing:

Traditional masculine language:

Barukh atah Adonai eloheynu melekh ha'olam m'shanah ha- b'ri-ot.

Feminine God language:

Brucha at elohateinu Ruach ha'Olam m'shanah ha- b'ri-ot.

Gender neutral language:

Nevarech et ein hachayim al shinu'i ha- b'ri-ot

Blessed is the One, our G-d ,Sovereign of the Universe, who has made all creatures different.

Optional chant:

Ki imkha m'kor ha-yim b'o r-kha nir-eh

Translation: With You is the fountain of life, in Your light we are bathed in light.

SAY:

Our next gathering will be _____ and I hope that if you ever need anything, you reach out to me or your Tzelem-mates.