

בס"ד

TRAINING MANUAL

VOLUME THREE

*For those visiting Jewish men and women
incarcerated - In prison*

An Aleph Institute Publication

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We Make the vessel, G-d does the rest

You Are Important

Most Aleph Institute volunteers are not Rabbis or professional counselors. Most are "lay" helpers or lay counselors. Don't let that discourage you from helping prisoners, ex-prisoners, and/or their families. Research shows you're important—and effective.

In *How to Be a People Helper*, Dr. Gary Collins said, "Several years ago a psychologist named Robert Carkhuff did a careful survey of all the research on the effectiveness of what he called 'lay helpers.'"

"The conclusions of this survey were startling. When lay counselors, with or without training, were compared with professionals, it was discovered that the patients of lay counselors do as well as or better than the patients of professional counselors."

One report about lay counseling said that:

- Psychiatrists are successful 41 percent of the time
- Psychologists are successful 42 percent of the time
- Lay counselors are successful 48 percent of the time

Giving Our Best

Freedom from responsibility of results is not an escape. You'll still want to put forth your best efforts. Being a good helper is hard work. You need to learn and practice skills to be the best helper you can be. Work hard to be responsible. Ask yourself after helping others

- "Was I faithful?"
- "Did I keep my commitments?"
- "Did I help this person the best way I could?"

Answering yes to these questions is one definition of success.

1. Describe a time when you felt totally or mostly responsible for helping someone get on the right track. If this never happened to you, can you tell of a situation when it happened to someone else?

2. In that situation how did you feel?

3. What was the outcome—for you and for the person you were helping?

4. How might things have been different if you'd depended more doing the best job and leaving the rest in G-d's hand — while you cared?

Talk about It



2

The Art of Listening

Careful listening says, "You are important to me," and it is a skill that can be learned

Key Concept

1. Most everyone thinks he or she knows what it means to listen. But it's a little harder to actually define the word. What do you think it means to listen?

Several years ago, a newspaper ad read: "I will listen to you talk for 30 minutes, without comment, for \$10". The person who placed the ad received more than 20 calls a day. Now *there was* someone who knew something about the needs of the human heart.

Social worker Florence Hollis has made this observation: "When a person knows that he has a good listener to talk to, he'll share his thoughts more fully, which in turn, makes it easier ... to help him with his problems. And, moreover, as he talks, the person needing help often finds a good solution to his problems himself."

1. Think about someone who has been a good listener to you. How did that person make you feel?

2. What did that person do that showed he or she was a good listener?

3. If that person helped you identify a problem—or a solution—what did he or she do that helped you see the truth?

Talk about It



Checking You Out



Your relationship with prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families is very important. Generally, they are extra-sensitive to signals sent by people they think want to "lecture" them.

Suspicion is often a way of life. They can quickly size someone up and make judgments. They may not speak the words but they're probably asking themselves: Are you here to earn points with your G-d? Are you here to have another story to tell? Are you here to pat yourself on the back? Are you here only because you were forced or arm twisted to? Or are you here because you care about me and want to relate to me as an important member of the Jewish community?

If you want to start to get to know someone as a brother or sister and as an important person of the Jewish community, it's best to start by listening to that person.

Talk



about It

1. What are some reasons why people don't listen carefully to someone else?

You may have come up with some of the following reasons why people don't listen:

- Other people (or radios or machinery) are making too much noise. There's a lot of distracting confusion.
- The speaker is boring.
- The listener is tired
- The listener isn't interested.
- The listener is worried about personal problems.
- A third person keeps interrupting.
- The listener doesn't understand what the speaker is talking about.
- The listener has already decided he or she knows what the speaker thinks, so why bother to really listen?
- The listener is so concerned about how to respond that he or she doesn't really listen. Sometimes we all are guilty of thinking that what we have to say is more important than what the other person is saying. This is especially true for people who are "helpers." But while we're thinking over our answers, we may be missing out on what we should be noticing about the speaker.

Frankly, it is easier *not* to listen than to listen. Research shows that we speak at 150 to 300 words per minute. We can hear 400 to 1,000 words per minute. Because we can listen faster than anyone can talk, we tend to daydream and tune people out.

It's also true that listening is just plain hard work. Research again shows that when a person listens well, the heart beats faster, more blood circulates, and body temperature rises slightly.

1. What can be some results of not listening?

Talk about It



Face the speaker squarely, on his or her level. Facing the speaker can show that you are giving that person your full attention. With your body you're saying, "right now, this conversation is what I'm most interested in."

If the speaker is standing, you should stand. If the person is sitting, try to find a chair to pull up, so you can talk as friends— or brothers and sisters—would.

If a conversation is lengthy or painful, you might try this to make a person at ease: Talk together as you go for a walk—side by side, as friends. In such a case, you'd want to frequently turn your head toward the speaker, again to show your interest.

Lean forward slightly toward the speaker. This is especially important when you are sitting. It helps keep you alert, and shows you are interested. If you lean back too much, you may end up slipping down in your chair. This can make you appear to be disinterested. Before long, your mind may start to wander.

Open posture is important. Your body and your face—your smile, your eyebrows, your eyes—all can show your emotion whether positive or negative. Angry? Bored? Worried? Pleased? Tired? Eager? Think about what your face and your body are silently saying about your state of mind. This point includes the "don'ts" of good listening.

Don't fold your arms in front of you or make fists as if you were closing the other person out.

The Listening FLOWER

Don't make annoying motions. Such as? Don't drum your fingers on a table. Don't keep looking at your watch. Don't play with a pen you're holding.

Watch your distance. Set yourself at an appropriate distance not too close, not too far away. Every culture has a different idea of how much space a person needs before feeling "crowded."

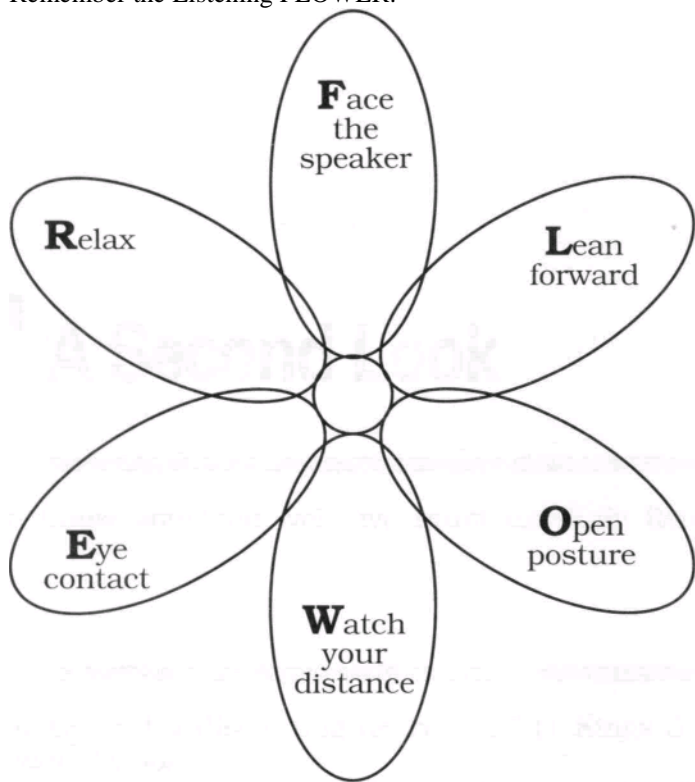
Arabs, for instance, feel that a man is shamed if he denies a friend his breath. But most Americans are very uncomfortable if someone is close enough to breathe into their faces—or step on their toes. At the same time, you do want to be close enough to hear well, to be heard, and to show that you take a real interest in other person's concerns.

Eye contact should be maintained. If you're staring out window or at your shoes or at other people, you send a signal that says, "You're not important." Maintain eye contact with speaker, but don't stare that person down.

Occasionally glance away, but center your focus—and attention—on the speaker. (This is a general rule, but try to be sensitive to the speaker, especially if he or she is foreign. In some cultures direct eye contact is in bad taste.)

Relax and be sincere. It's important to feel comfortable while being aware of your body language. Don't overreact. Do you know people who always wear fake smiles? People whose language doesn't match the situation? Adapt these points to own style and to the situation you're in.

Remember the Listening FLOWER:



In all situations, use good common sense. These FLOWER points are general guidelines, and not absolute commands. Don't be phony or mechanical.

Just as it takes time to ride a bike, it takes time—and practice—to listen carefully and naturally.

In *No-Nonsense Communication*, Donald Kirkpatrick says, "Improved listening skills will not necessarily result in improved listening. We must apply these skills. We must be convinced that it pays to listen. The combination of desire (I want to listen), effort (I'm going to work at it), and skill (I know how **to do** it) will result **in** improved listening."

It Takes Practice



4

A Second Look

To get to know someone well, we must carefully listen *and observe*.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe, of sainted and blessed memory, was once asked how he stood for many hours distributing dollars to men women and children (at the age of ninety), to which he responded “when you are counting diamonds, the it is not difficult.”

King Solomon was offered any gift he wanted, and he asked for a discerning or listening heart. The king knew what each of us must eventually learn—that all real listening is done in the heart.

There's more to listening than showing interest. There's more to listening than hearing. What you see is often as important as what you hear.

Think about the many phrases we use to describe emotions. They really are describing a person's body language:

- chin up
- grit your teeth
- catch your eye
- stiff upper lip

With your eyes you can "read" another person in several ways-just as that person can "read" your concern for him or her.

Key Concept

What You See Is Important



One afternoon a teenager was swimming in the ocean, which was ' a little rough. A man on the beach clearly saw that the boy was drowning. Even though the boy didn't call for help, the man swam out to him and saved his life.

Once the boy was on shore, he admitted that he had been drowning. "Well, why didn't you yell for help?" the man asked.

"I was afraid of what my friends would say if they thought I couldn't handle it myself."

2. There's a little of the "I can do it myself spirit in all of us. Let's say you walked into the home of a prisoner's family. What might you observe that would tell you that things aren't under control as much as the spouse claims they are?

Talk about It

When you listen and observe a person, you want to do two things—gather *information* and understand a person's *feelings*. For both, observing is as helpful as listening because sometimes it's what is not said that is important. What a person means is more important than what is said.

Have you ever asked someone, "What's wrong?" and received the answer, "Nothing." But you sometimes just know that "nothing" really means "everything." Often that insight comes by what you've observed.

As you listen and observe, think about looking for answers to these questions:

Who is this person? This might include listening and observing to learn about this person's background. Listening for answers to this question shows you are interested in that person as an individual.

Note: Although you want to know who someone is, it's usually best not to probe for information. Don't ask prisoners why they're in prison or for how long. When you've earned a person's trust, the facts tend to come up.

Where is this person? This question refers to more than someone's physical place. What is this person's physical energy?

Looking for Information and Feelings



level? Where is this person in relationship to G-d? Where is this person in relationship to family? Where is this person in relationship to you? Where is this person in relationship to self and surroundings?

What is this person feeling? Is what he or she saying really what he or she means or wants you to hear? Most people are like icebergs. You see 10 percent, and 90 percent is below the surface.

Why is this person where he or she is? Why is this person feeling a certain way? What is the "because" behind the emotion?

What clues do we observe and hear and see that tell us what someone is feeling and how strong the emotion is? The list of answers could go on and on but here are a few for starters:

- tone and volume of voice
- facial expression (raised eyebrows, furrowed brow, teary eyes)
- wringing or clapping hands
- shrugging shoulders

As you spend more time with someone, you observe patterns in the way that person acts or speaks. Something out of the ordinary can tell you that something is wrong.

Many Faces of Feeling

You may use this grid to record various intensities of feeling.

Feeling Category Intense Feeling Mild Feeling

Happy

Sad

Angry

Feeling Category *Intense Feeling* *Mild Feeling*

Afraid

Guilty

Loving

Confused

When All Goes to Pot

Observing is especially important when it comes to drugs. *Statistics* show that there is a strong link between drugs and criminal activity. In a U.S. Department of Justice survey of 12 major cities in 6 months in 1987, 53 to 79 percent of the men arrested for serious offenses tested positive for illegal drugs.

Many prisoners, ex-prisoners, and family members fall into trouble when they can't say no to drugs. For many, drugs are part of their lives, either past or present. They're easy to get and the temptation to return to them is great.

In his book *Dare to Discipline*, Dr. James Dobson lists eight symptoms that may indicate drug abuse. Many of these can be noticed as you observe someone over a period of time. Changes may occur in a person's actions or appearance. Every drug produces special symptoms, so the following summary of Dobson's list is only a guideline. Also, emotional problems may cause some of these symptoms.

Warning Signs of Drug Abuse

1. Inflammation of eyelids and nose. Very wide or small eye pupils.
2. Extreme bursts of energy (loud, hysterical, and jumpy) **or** extreme lack of energy (sluggish, gloomy, and withdrawn).
3. Extreme appetite for food—very great or very poor. .
4. Sudden personality changes.
5. Bad body and breath odor. Cleanliness ignored.
6. An upset digestive system. Headaches and double vision. Changes in skin tone and body stance.
7. Needle marks on body, often the arms. Marks can get infected and look like sores.
8. Moral values decline and may be replaced with wild ideas.

Some of these changes in a person might also indicate drug use:

- Expensive new items you're sure the person can't afford.
(This might point to someone selling drugs.)
- Unexplained absences from work or appointments.
- Changes in attitude—someone trying to hide secrets; someone you know well suddenly becoming cold toward you, etc.
- Changes in companions. Though you shouldn't judge people by appearance, you can use good judgment to discern if someone is being influenced by people who are not good for him or her.



Talk about It



Guidelines for Help

1. Are there other signs of drug abuse that you have observed?

In the next chapter we'll discuss how important your responses to someone are. But before we take on that whole topic, let's touch on this issue of drug abuse. If you suspect someone is using drugs, consider these guidelines.

1. If you have a close relationship with the person, you might lovingly confront him or her. This may network if the person is unwilling or unable to admit the problem.
2. Talk with others who know this person, asking for advice and information.
3. If the person admits to a problem and wants help, talk to your Aleph Institute field director or your rabbi. You might also ask for help from the drug-abuse resources available in your community.

Local Resources

Here you may make notes of any local drug abuse programs where you might refer people.



5 An Understanding Response

Our response to a person can open or close doors to further communication.

If good listening depended only on listening attentively, then a dog is probably the best listener anyone can have. But when we talk, we want someone to listen—and respond. It takes two people to make a conversation.

Responding with appropriate words to prisoners, ex-prisoners, or their family members is another key part of ministering to their needs. Some responses tend to close ears rather than open doors. They relay the message, "I don't value you enough to hear you out."

Let's call people who respond that way "verbal villains." Do you know any of these people who like to interrupt you when you're talking? Are you guilty?

1. Pollyanna Perfect. This person denies that you (the speaker) have any problem—despite anything you say. Pollyanna Perfect often says, "Hey, everything is really fine. You just need a more positive outlook."

Key Concept

Introduction to Verbal Villains



Verbal Villains



2. Denny Detective. He keeps interrupting you with questions, trying to get information he wants. (There's nothing wrong with asking questions. It's the endless number of questions and the interrupting that makes Denny a villain.) Denny Detective often cuts into the middle of a sentence.

3. Darlene Drill Sergeant. She likes to tell you what to do. Darlene's favorite lines are, "You should . . ."; "You must. . ."; "You have to stop ..."

4. Ramon Reactor. He shows anger or shock at what you're saying. He may even interrupt you with an argument. Ramon often gasps, "You did what?"

5. Susie Soothsayer, She's always telling you what's going to happen in the future. Susie's like a broken record, "If you don't, then . . ."; "If you do this, then that will happen."

6. Paul Psychologist. Paul likes to analyze what you do and why. He leans forward and says, "The reason you did that is . . ."; "Let me tell you why you think that way"; "Your problem is . . ."

7. Norman Negator. No matter what you say, Norman says it's wrong. He's often overheard saying, "You shouldn't feel that way"; "That will never work."

8. Rosita Rescuer. Rosita always knows what's best for you. She frequently says, "I suggest. . ."; "Let me help you"; "What you need is . . ."

9. Mona Monopolizer. She always has a story better than yours: "Let me tell you my problem"; "That reminds me of..."; "That's nothing. I once ..."

10. Sammy Space Cadet. You know his mind is far away, maybe even in outer space. He doesn't pay attention to what you're saying. Occasionally, Sammy comes back to earth and responds, "What did you say?"

11. Henrietta Holy. She frequently interrupts you with an easy answer Bible verse or a pet religious phrase. Henrietta has been known to say, "It's G-d's will"; "The Lord will work it out"; "The Bible says . . ."—and all in five minutes.

12. Ronnie Repairman. He must find an immediate answer or solution to fix every problem. (Sometimes Ronnie Repairman and Henrietta Holy walk around arm in arm.) When Ronnie hears someone's tale of woe, he says, "You've got to get over this right away."

13. Felix Filler. Felix can't stand silence in a conversation. If there's a pause, he jumps in and starts talking about most anything, just to fill the silence.

Enough for the don'ts of responding to a conversation. What kinds of responses open doors and tell someone, "Hey, I'm here. I'm with you. I hear you"?

It's been said that one of a person's greatest needs is to feel understood by another person. Being a good listener is not enough. A person needs to know he or she is being heard and understood.

On one level, you cannot truly understand someone else's situation. On another level, you can have an understanding spirit that helps to draw a person out.

I'm with You

Talk about It



1. When you're talking with a friend, why is it important that you feel that you've been understood?
2. Some people are hesitant to show that they understand what someone else has said. These people feel that "I understand what you said" means "I agree with what you said." How is "I understand you" different from "I agree with you"?
3. When you're talking to someone, what responses from the listener encourage you to be more open?

A Few Pointers for Responding



Nod occasionally. Sometimes it helps to nod now and then while the person is talking. (But be careful not to overdo it.)

Acknowledge. You might show you're paying close attention by making occasional quiet sounds such as "Mmmm," "Uh huh," "I see," or "Ohhh." (Again, this is helpful only when it's not overdone.)

Ask questions sparingly. When you ask questions you take charge of the direction of the conversation. When you're "directing" the conversation, you are likely to be closing rather than opening doors to understanding.

When you do ask questions, ask open questions that can't be answered with yes or no. Try questions that start with *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*. (Note: *How* and *why* may come across as challenges to the speaker's motives or intelligence.)

Restate the speaker's idea or point of view at appropriate times, focusing on the important points. It is a way of saying, "Have I understood you correctly? Is this what you're feeling?"

State what you're hearing, to help a person clearly explain thoughts and feelings. This is important for you and for the speaker for three reasons:

- It lets you know if you are really understanding what that person is saying and feeling.
- It lets the speaker know that he or she is being heard correctly.
- It gives the speaker a chance to correct any misunderstandings you have. For this reason, it's important that you always allow the person to confirm or deny your observation.

To the statement, "My wife is drinking too much," you might respond, "Do you feel worried because your wife is not in control of herself?"

Give feeling statements. As you respond, show that you understand the speaker's feelings by making "feeling statements": "You feel _____ because _____."

When you make a feeling statement, you might start the sentence with "I wonder if. . ." If someone starts listing off all his sins, you might say, "I wonder if you ever feel guilty because of what you've done."

Repeat as a question what you've heard. To get someone to explain herself, you might repeat something said—in the form of a question. Suppose the wife of a newly released prisoner says, "If he doesn't go out and look for a job tomorrow, I'm going to leave him." You might respond, "You're really angry at him, aren't you?"

"You bet I am! I'm sick of supporting the family myself"

"Do you feel that he's not sharing a commitment to the family because he won't look for work?"

Don't be afraid of silence. People sometimes just need time to gather their thoughts. If someone seems to be struggling to get something out, you might help that person identify what he or she is feeling.

Don't overreact to initial hostility. A volunteer once visited an inmate in solitary confinement. The man began to shout and scream and curse. The volunteer says, "I stood there and said, 'Look, if it's making you feel better, get it all off your chest. He called me every name in the book and a minute later he was bawling like a baby."

Special note: Be careful about showing any form of physical affection to a prisoner. This is especially important when women volunteers are working with male inmates. In a prison environment, even a pat on the hand can be misunderstood and misinterpreted.

For example, in one prison a guard noticed an older woman volunteer giving an inmate an innocent hug. The guard reported the incident and the inmate wound up in solitary confinement.

Also, lonely inmates might misunderstand a volunteer's intent. A handshake may be the best physical contact a volunteer can have with a prisoner. Always know the rules before you touch a prisoner, other than to shake hands.

After the training, you may want further practice with the following exercise. One person should be the prisoner, who is the speaker, and another person is the listener.

"I hate my mother . . ." (Listener responds.)

"She punished me. Beat me so bad with an extension cord that I still have these scars on my legs. See these scars? ..." (Listener responds.)



"Once, just once, I won a prize, a trophy in a dancing contest. You know what she did? .
(Listener responds.)

"She hit me over the head with it. Fractured my skull..." (Listener responds.)

"When I was 10 I ran away from home ..." (Listener responds.)

"I know, you say G-d loves me. But I don't feel like anybody loves me, including G-d. He's never done anything for me ..." (Listener responds.)

Talk about It



1. What did the listener say or do that "worked" to encourage the prisoner to be more open? What more could he or she have done?

2. What *feelings* did the prisoner express?

3. How would you finish this sentence? This prisoner feels _____
because_____.

4. Where might the conversation go from here?

5. What responses can make it clear that you have heard someone even though you don't believe or like what is being said?

After the training, you may want to practice this activity with three people.

You'll need one person to be the speaker, one to be the observer, and one to be the listener.

The listener should practice the skills taught in this manual. At the end of several minutes, the listener should summarize what the speaker said. This summary should include statements like "You felt ____ because ____."

The speaker should correct any misunderstandings, and the observer can offer comments.

Then each person should take turns at being the speaker, listener, and observer.

The speaker should share a personal experience that fits into one of the following categories;

- a time a friend talked you into doing something wrong
- a time when you lost a lot of freedom
- a time when you were separated from your family
- a time when you were threatened by someone with more power than you
- a time when you were punished—either justly or unjustly
- a time when you felt totally overwhelmed by "the system"
- a time when you could not forgive yourself for something you'd done

It Happened Like This



Drawing Someone Out

We've talked a lot about listening and responding with understanding. Let's summarize why this is so important when working with prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families.

A listener's response helps a speaker to understand herself or himself better. It's not only the listener who's discovering answers to questions such as "Who is this person?" "Where is this

person?" "What is this person feeling and why?" As good listeners and responders, we are helping other people uncover these answers about themselves.

As people learn more about themselves, it's easier for them to accept responsibility for their lives and make needed choices. In the next chapter, we'll explore ways to help people accept responsibility.

6

Making Choices

It's important for people to understand the balance between taking responsibility for their lives and letting G-d take charge.

Many people refuse to take responsibility for their actions. How easy to blame others and/or circumstances for all your problems.

We've learned how important it is for people to express their feelings and to feel understood. We need to sympathetically understand how circumstances and other people have contributed to someone's problems. But blaming others for all our problems is not healthy and it's not dealing with reality.

The people you're helping need to realize that, regardless of the past, they can *now* make positive choices to improve their lives. It's important to help them leave the past and look toward the future. You might point out, "The past is a nice place to visit, but it's not a good place to live."

Life is a series of problems that we can moan about or try to solve. But before we can solve a problem, we need to accept responsibility for it.

It's important to strike a balance between taking responsibility for our lives and letting G-d take charge of our lives and depending on Him.

Key Concept

Helping Others Choose



Your Responsibility

You'll want to help people make choices at the same time they depend on G-d and His power to work in their lives. G-d does not **expect** us to do in our weakness what His strength can provide.

Remember, your main responsibility is to help others find their own answers. You'll be surprised how well they can do this if you are willing to listen deeply, observe carefully, and respond appropriately—skills you've already practiced. You'll want to continue working on your skills.

Talk about It



1. "It's better to teach people how to fish than to give them a fish. If you give them a fish, they may eat for a day. If you teach them to fish, they can eat for a lifetime." Tell about a time in your life when someone helped you help yourself. Why was this important?
2. Another saying is, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink." How do you feel when someone tries to force you to do something you don't want to do? Can you give an example of this?

It's better to ask, "How are you going to handle this?" than to tell someone what to do, or what you would do. Let me give you some sound advice: Be slow on giving advice.

Don't take on more responsibility than you should. Don't let them become overly dependent on you. Yet do provide needed support, like a crutch until healing takes place.

Refer people to other helps as needed. In the case of severe problems such as addictions and abusive behavior, the 12-step recovery groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, and Parents Anonymous can be very helpful.

Part 4 of the Aleph Institute Volunteer Training includes a manual (*Finding Help: When and How to Make Referrals*) that gives information on available referral resources.

Your goal is to help people grow and become mature. You won't want to simply bail people out. That only continues to contribute to irresponsibility.

People in crisis are easily influenced by suggestions. Don't push your solutions. Let the person you help suggest and move toward his or her own solutions. You can, though, present truth and options. Then stop and ask for a response. Asking questions helps you know where a person is and how you can help him or her accept responsibility.

Another helpful response is to remind people of the essence of the prayer: "G-d, help me to change the things I need to change. Help me accept the things I cannot change. Give me the wisdom to know the difference."

Some counselors stress that people solve problems best when their strengths are emphasized, not their weaknesses. You'll want to look for positive qualities in people and point them out.

You might say, "I respect your ability to describe your problems so well. You sound like you really want to change. I admire your honesty."

It Takes Time

Helping a person accept responsibility for his or her life and actions is a process that requires great patience. Helping a person work through things and sort out things may take months or years.

You probably won't see immediate results, quick fixes, or fast cures. Sometimes a person in this type of counseling work never sees results in a particular person. Helping people accept responsibility for their lives requires a deep commitment

As you help in that way, you can be sure you've helped save another life, and as the Talmud states, “by saving one Jewish soul, it is as if he has saved an entire world.” And the process of helping others grow will help you on your own journey.

The next chapter deals with helping people set goals. That chapter builds on what you've learned so far. Abraham Lincoln once said that we need to know where we are and what we are doing before we can judge what we should do next. It was true a hundred years ago and it's still true now—whether someone is inside of prison or out.

7

Take Aim—Fire

"If you aim for nothing, you're sure to hit it." So the saying goes. People can miss out on a great deal of what G-d has to offer because they don't set goals and reach for them.

Key Concept

Why Set Goals?

According to one national study, only 13 percent of the population makes a practice of setting goals and only 3 percent writes them down. A study done on goal setting by Yale University graduates found that only 3 percent had written goals at graduation. Twenty years later, that 3 percent was worth more in financial terms than the other 97 percent put together. Besides gaining financial success, the 3 percent seemed happier.

As you work with prisoners, ex-prisoners, and their families, you can be G-d's instrument to help them improve their lives by setting and reaching goals.

The Torah and Talmud is full of stories and principles relating to goal setting. Tehilim tells us to pattern our lives after the ant, who plans for the future. Joseph's plans saved a country.

If you're working with prisoners, help them see that, although being in prison is painful, the time they have is a wonderful opportunity to learn to set and work toward goals.

When talking about goals, you'll want to define and illustrate what you mean. Some people think of a goal only in terms of a football game. Ask the person you're helping to tell you what goal means to him or her.

To put the abstract concept of *goal* into concrete understanding, you might mention some goal you have set and then reached. For example, a runner might set a goal of running five miles a day, three times a week. Every week that he does this, he has reached his goal.

Talk About It

How would you explain a goal to someone who did not know what one was? Can you think of a good illustration or story that would explain *goal*?

What Is a Goal?

A goal is more than a wild wish. It's important that people realize that goals are far more than dreams or wild wishes for something. A goal is something to plan for and work toward. This involves more than just praying. It involves action on their part.

If the past has been one failure after another, it's easy to let yesterdays drag a person down. But when you're talking "goals," you've got to help people think "future."

Goal Areas

We've spent a lot of time talking about the importance of listening and understanding. Let's look at how you help someone plan for the future.

Life might be broken up into seven areas in which anyone would want to set goals:

1. spiritual
2. physical
3. emotional
4. financial
5. educational/knowledge
6. job/vocation
7. family/relationships with others

With the person you're helping, you might discuss what the Torah has to say about each of those subjects. How should we relate to each of them? Be sure you ask the person you're helping how he or she defines each of these areas.

You can help people think of setting goals in terms of planning a trip. First you locate where you are. Then you decide where you want to go. Next you plan your route.

How could anyone hope to decide on a route for a trip without first deciding on a destination?

In setting goals, it's helpful to think of these steps:

- Where am I now?
- Where do I want to go?
- How do I get there?

The Big Picture

Where Am I Now?

As you listen to people, understand them, and help them take responsibility for their actions, you'll help them see where they are now.

It's usually hard to face the reality of your situation without getting feedback from one or more persons who have listened to you and observed you over a period of time. It's so easy for us to fool ourselves and think that we're either worse off or better off than we really are.

Where Do I Want to Go?

The problem is finding out what you want and need in any area of life. What are you going to do with your life?

When you have an uninterrupted hour later this week, try this exercise. Then suggest it at an appropriate time to those you're helping:

Make a list of all the things you would like to do if you had all the time, money, and energy in the world. Though goals and dreams are not the same thing, naming our dreams can help us see what direction our goals should be in.

Moving these wants and dreams from the mind onto paper can be the first step to making them come true. It may be surprising—no, amazing—what happens when you write down your goals.

Until they are on paper, dreams may not seem real or possible. Writing dreams acknowledges that they exist. And the act of recording them plants a seed. Suddenly you may find that you won't be able to shake them loose; they'll start to demand time, attention, and nurturing.

Encourage the people you're helping to write down where they want to be. Goals should be short-term, medium-term, and long-term. Generally, short-term goals are those that can be reached within weeks or several months. Medium-term goals may be those that take over six months to reach. And long-term goals may take years to reach.

How Do I Get There?

One reason people fail to reach goals is that they don't plan all the steps. Think of steps toward a goal like the rungs of a ladder. If one is missing, you could fall through, failing to reach your goal.

You'll want to help people understand the process of reaching a goal.

Careful step-by-step planning, with time schedules for each step, helps people reach goals.

Encourage the people you're helping to set aside a time each day to go over their goals. Also, you might suggest that it is helpful to prayerfully go over goals each morning upon arising, and each evening just before going to sleep. Doing this regularly for a month can produce great results.

Goals should be:

- specific or concrete
- realistic or attainable
- measurable

Example A: Suppose you had this as your goal: "I will be more respect." That goal is realistic and attainable, but it is not specific and concrete—or measurable.

Let's revise the goal: "I will learn to respect my mother-in-law (write the name), whom I now hate." That is more specific and concrete, but it is not measurable.

A better revision could be: "I will learn to respect my mother-in-law by respecting myself, and writing her a letter once a month." That goal includes all three requirements for a good goal.

A goal of *winning* a marathon may be specific and measurable, but it may not be realistic and attainable. A goal of *finishing* a race may be more realistic and attainable.

Losing weight may be desirable, realistic, and attainable. But that goal needs to be more specific, concrete, and measurable. "I will lose eight pounds, two pounds weekly for four weeks" meets the criteria for goal setting.

A prisoner might want to earn an honest living when he gets out of prison. His goal might be to take two courses every semester for two years, so he can finish his GED (high school equivalency diploma).

Step by Step

Requirements for Good Goals

Preventing Unnecessary Failure

Remember to encourage the people you're working with to not to bite off more than they can chew. There's no better way to quick defeat. Failure can cause discouragement. And discouragement can lead someone to totally abandon his or her goals. Don't let people fall into this trap. It's usually best to work on only three goals at a time.

For undisciplined people and some others, it may be best to work on only one at a time. Don't let people set themselves up for failure. Many have already experienced so much failure that more can be devastating. It's important to help them to see the only two ways to truly fail: 1) to quit; 2) to fail to learn from a failure.

Talk about It

1. When goals are not reached, how can we help people deal with the sense of failure?

Personal Goals

A good goal is:

1. specific or concrete
2. realistic or attainable
3. measurable

My goal is:

Act—Go for It!

We've spent quite a bit of time talking about setting goals. But the final step in reaching a goal is going for it—once all the planning is underway.

There are three main ways you can assist people in setting and reaching goals:

- listening to and understanding them
- planning with them
- providing accountability through feedback and check in We've covered

the first two points. Let's look at the third.

Usually it's not lack of ability that prevents people from reaching their goals. More often than not, the decision to reach a goal was never firmly made. Or they slowly lose motivation to continue "running the race."

The Rebbe of sainted and blessed memory would encourage us and let us know that when we do what is right and what is demanded of us, we are able to tap into powers we did not know existed. We have to do what we can, and G-d will take care of the rest.

It's vitally important that you stay in touch with the people you're helping to set goals. As they set their goals, you might want to set some of your own. Share your goals with them and then agree to check up on each other. Encourage each other. Work with each other, and pray that we should all be successful. And most of all, remember that we are required to be joyous in our service and life, as we are taught "*ivdu es Hashem b'simcha*" serve G-d with joy.

After one goal is reached, replace it with another goal and keep on growing!

Quotable Quote

"Come to the edge," he said. They said:
"We are afraid." "Come to the edge," he
said.

They came. He pushed them . . . and they
flew.

Those who love us may well push us
when we're ready to fly.

—Guillaume Apollinaire

After You Go Home— Extra Activities

The following are activities you might want to use with people you're helping. First, you might want to try them with a family member, an old friend, or someone who's in the training with you.

Activity 1

PROBLEMS INTO GOALS

As you're discussing someone's problems or weaknesses, help that person turn them around and make goals out of them.

For example, if a person has a drug problem, her goal could be to be drug free. If the problem is lack of education, his goal could be to get his GED (high school equivalency diploma). Turn despair into hope by flipping problems into goals.

Activity 2a

WRITING GOALS

Ask the person you are helping to write a short paragraph of what his or her life is like now. Then have him write a one-paragraph description of where he wants it to be in one year. Next, a third paragraph about where he wants to be in five years.

Take a separate sheet of paper for each of the seven goal areas listed on earlier. At the top of each page write one of the seven goal areas. Underneath each heading, have the person write a paragraph describing where he is now—in that one area. Then ask him to write three weaknesses in each area—or three things to change or improve. These will become goals.

Note: Be sensitive to reading and writing levels. Assist as needed, offering to be a secretary if the person you're helping reads or writes at low levels

Activity 2b

WORKING ON GOALS

Have the person write short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals, as appropriate, for each goal listed during activity 2a.

Note: Be sure each goal is specific, realistic, and measurable.

Then have him or her select three goals to start working on. It's best to work on one or two and succeed (then go on to work on another) than to work on several and fail at them all.

Make a step-by-step plan with time schedules to meet the goals.

Encourage the person to prayerfully resolve each morning and evening to work on these goals. This might be a positive prayer thanking G-d for help in reaching (state the specific goal).

Activity 3

FOLLOW UP

Try to meet regularly—once a week, if possible—with the person. Or write weekly to encourage and see what progress is being made. If you're working on your own set of goals at the same time, report on your personal progr