

אִמְצַ לֵב OMETZ LEV



Family Schmooze # 1

Family Schmooze offers a set of open-ended questions that may be discussed around the dinner table, in the car, or anywhere you are together. If there is more than one child in your family, the discussion will bridge the learning and thinking between younger and older, older and younger.

Our module focuses on the Jewish concept of *ometz lev*, inner strength. We are using the term in the sense of using our inner strength to make better behavior decisions when faced with Big Feelings.

This week, the children were introduced to the metaphor of a Jack-in-the-Box as a way to see that Big Feelings (anger, excitement, sadness, happiness, anxiety) can explode. They learned that Jack popping out of his box illustrates three behavior choices – an explosion (he and his emotions pop out), nothing (he just stays in the box and stews in his feelings), or through a controlled opening he emerges with a bit of care. So, when faced with Big Feelings we can use our *ometz lev* (our inner strength) to determine what our next behaviors will be. Additionally, children were told: all feelings are valid, all behaviors are not. You may wish to pick up on the Jack-in-the-Box metaphor as you and your child encounter various Big Feelings as the week unfolds. To see the Jack-in-the-Box metaphor in action, check out: <https://tinyurl.com/y5lczann>



Looking for a book for your child? Consider any of these that touch on our theme:

- [Sadie's Almost Marvelous Menorah](#), by Jamie Korngold (for ages 5–6), a 2019 PJ Library book
- [Terrible, Terrible](#), by Robin Bernstein (for ages 5–9), a 2011 PJ Library book
- [The Koufax Dilemma](#), by Steven Schnur (for ages 5–9), available on Amazon
- [Life, After](#), by Sara Littman (for ages 11–13), available on Amazon



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Family Schmooze # 2

Last week, your child was introduced to Big Feelings. This week we explored how Moses at the burning bush and Miriam after crossing the Sea of Reeds both used *ometz lev* (inner strength) to use the moment to make a good behavior choice.

This week, you might help your child realize when a Big Feelings Moment has arisen and identify it as a time to use their *ometz lev* to stop and think about next steps, just as Moses and Miriam did.



Consider discussing:

- How do you know when you're having a Big Feeling?
- How can I (the parent/caregiver/adult) help you in a Big Feeling Moment to use your *ometz lev* to make a good behavior decision?



BONUS: You may be familiar with "Miriam's Song," by Debbie Friedman, which catches the exuberance of Miriam and the women dancing once they crossed safely over the Sea of Reeds. This link is of Debbie singing the song at a summer camp almost 30 years ago:
<https://tinyurl.com/y5879smy>. Enjoy!



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Family Schmooze # 3

This week, we spent time exploring a variety of tools that anyone can use when faced with a Big Feelings moment. We saw that both Moses at the burning bush and Miriam after crossing the Sea of Reeds used their *ometz lev* to choose a tool. On the other hand, Moses smashed the Ten Commandments in anger when he saw the golden calf; he did not use his *ometz lev* when faced with a Big Feeling moment.

Here are the tools we specifically talked about – half are to help one calm down and half help someone make a good choice.

- Taking deep breaths
- Closing one's eyes
- Finding a quiet space
- Asking for advice
- Praying to God
- Making a list of three good choices
- Thinking about the problem



Which would be helpful to your child? What other ones would you add to the list? When might you refer to the *ometz lev* tools this week?

For those of you with older children, ask to see the game they have been playing this week.



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Family Schmooze # 4

This week we learned how the people in Billings, Montana used their *ometz lev* to deal with Big Feelings that arose when a Jewish family found a brick thrown through a window at Hanukkah time. The citizens of Billings joined together as a community and showed that they would not let hate happen in their town (ask your child what amazing thing people from Billings did!).

We looked at the different tools the people used when faced with Big Feelings. However, know that in the version told your children, some details were added to help them catch the Big Feelings and learn some additional *ometz lev* tools; “taking deep breaths” or “making a list” were not part of the real occurrence.

- How can your child plan ahead to use their *ometz lev* tools? Check last week’s Family Schmooze for a list.
- How can you help your child choose an appropriate tool for the situation?



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Family Schmooze # 5

You know those popular glitter jars? The ones that have glitter, confetti and sometimes other small items that swirl when shaken? Today, we used a glitter jar as a way to explain how our brains behave when impacted by Big Feelings - it is near-to-impossible to make choices or move ahead when one's glitter is swirling. But, by tapping into one's *ometz lev*, one's inner strength, the glitter has an opportunity to calm itself. Younger children will be making a glitter jar this week to use as a tool when Big Feelings arise. For those of you with older children, you can find a foolproof recipe here: <https://mamainstincts.com/foolproof-calm-bottle/>

Hopefully, now that we're at the end of the *Ometz Lev* module your child has the ability to recognize Big Feeling moments and even identify the times when Jewish heroes from our past became highly emotional. Indeed, Jews past and present have handled their Big Feelings well and not so well - it is hard to make good decisions all the time. But both your child and you have been gifted an *ometz lev* toolbox to help in times of high emotionality. Your child could find a quiet space like Moses when overwhelmed by all he saw at the burning bush, or dance like Miriam when "beyond-excited."

Ideally, your family schmoozes this week will help your family tap into this new toolbox.

