

סֻכַּת שְׁלוֹם

SUKKAT SHALOM

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.

This week, the learners began defining *sukkat shalom* as a place where people can feel safe and protected. [PS - *sukkat* is pronounced soo-kaht.]



Choose one or more of these questions for a *schmooze*, an informal conversation:

- What in our house (or school, or synagogue, or neighborhood) helps us feel safe?
- Who helps us feel safe?
- Where does each family member feel safe and protected?
Where is each person's *sukkat shalom*?
 - Answers might include: a space in the house or outside, in someone's arms, or while involved in a favorite activity.
- How do we (can we) help each other feel safe when something is scary to a family member - a bad storm outside, someone is very sick, when learning at school feels hard, etc. ?



סִפְּת שְׁלוֹם

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Family Schmooze # 2

This week we expanded the idea of *sukkat shalom* beyond the idea of a physical thing that offers protection (a building, a piece of clothing that wraps one up) to a more intangible one. It might be a parent's hug, a friend's hand, a quiet place to sit in the forest, etc.



Together as a family, see how big a list you can brainstorm of *sukkat shalom* examples, both tangible (what you can see) and intangible (what you can feel or think about). As each person offers ideas, keep track of the number! Feel free to add other examples that pop later in the week, perhaps even ones you see between family members.



BONUS 1: SONG As parent, as caregiver, you will probably enjoy Debbie Friedman's song, "Shelter of Peace." <https://tinyurl.com/yyp85rzs>

BONUS 2: BACK TO BACK (GAME) - Sit with a member of your family, back-to-back, with paper and a writing utensil. Take turns describing your personal *sukkat shalom* while the other person is drawing what they hear described. Then, share the drawings and discuss to see how well the person drawing understood what was described.



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Family Schmooze # 3

This week, learners expanded their image of *sukkat shalom*.

In that spirit, we offer a short film with four members of a family burdened by all that happened to them in the week: <https://vimeo.com/74688664>.



We share it with you because it ends with the challenge, **“How will you help to create a *sukkat shalom* for others ...?”** As the parent/caregiver, you could watch the video by yourself and then consider how your family might engage with its idea of labeling the week’s challenges and “leaving them at the door.” Another option is to preview it in order to decide if you want to view it with your older elementary age child(ren) and see where the conversation goes!



BONUS: Finally, you may enjoy this old folk song, "Peace Will Come" by Tom Paxton: <https://tinyurl.com/y4wcej2t>. It became popular at Jewish camps, youth groups and some synagogues by Jewish songwriter, composer and song leader, Dan Nichols <https://tinyurl.com/y6lglm2o>.



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SUKKAT SHALOM Family Schmooze # 4

In the evening worship service, there is a blessing called *Hashkiveinu*. It's here that we find a line where we ask God to spread over us a "sukkah of peace," the basis of exploration in the *Sukkat Shalom* module.

In Jewish tradition, humans are often referred to as God's partners. We challenge your family to consider how YOU might spread a shelter of peace over someone else. You might do something physical – for example, contribute to a local food bank so those who are not safe from hunger may eat. You might focus on emotional safety and discover a new member of your community who might like to be enveloped in your family's friendship. OR you might want to find a new way to spread a shelter of peace over yourselves as a family.



So this week's question is, **how can your family spread a *sukkat shalom*, a shelter of peace over others or yourselves?** (Note: If you have younger children, the adult(s) in the household might want to brainstorm a few ideas in advance of a schmooze. If your children are older, the full brainstorming process could be interesting and empowering.)



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SUKKAT SHALOM Family *Schmooze* # 4



A San Francisco organization called, Shalom Bayit (“peace in the home”) posted this on its website:

On this holiday [of *Sukkot*] we keep in mind people who today don’t have a protective roof over their head:

- People who are homeless
- Those who are losing their homes because of the economic crisis
- People who live in substandard housing
- Those who live in environmentally unsafe communities
- Women and children who are abused and unsafe in their own homes

We have all felt vulnerable in our lives. We have all longed at some point for greater safety, shelter and protection ... Let us all work together to create protective structures where they don’t exist. We can help those in need find safety, healing and wholeness. We can provide a “shelter of peace” (*sukkat shalom*) for those who are most vulnerable in our society – a network of support and caring we build for ourselves and one another.

<https://tinyurl.com/y3vadr8k>

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Family Schmooze # 5

This is the last week of the *sukkat shalom* module. The learners spent some time talking about the fragility of a *sukkah* and the relationship of that to our bigger concept of safety. They saw part of this video with actress Mayim Bialik: "Building My Sukkah," <https://tinyurl.com/y6jn6edv> (for the connection to our theme, see especially :41 - :50)



For this week's schmooze, check out this lovely *sukkat shalom* musing by former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin:

Peace is the beauty of life.
It is sunshine.

It is the smile of a child,
the love of a mother,
the joy of a father,
the togetherness of a family.

It is the advancement of (hu)mans,
the victory of a just cause,
the triumph of truth."



It could be a fun project to create a family *sukkat shalom* poem that could be posted to your refrigerator, read at bedtime or before a family meal, or any other time that feels right. Consider using the same format as the poem above.

Sukkat Shalom is _____

It is _____ . . .

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סִפְתֵּי שְׁלוֹם

SUKKAT SHALOM

Family Schmooze # 5



Finally, we leave you with this reading that asks of all the images that could be used, why is it called “a *sukkah* of *shalom*” instead of “a majestic palace of *shalom*?”

“[P]eace is one of the highest of all Jewish values, while the *sukkah* is relatively basic and simple, common and ordinary. Why did he not write, “build over us the stately mansion of your peace,” or “the majestic palace,” or “the grand castle”? Such structures are built on strong foundations, out of concrete or stone; once they are built, they will stand by themselves for hundreds of years. In contrast, a *sukkah* is fragile and vulnerable, exposed to the elements. A strong wind can easily blow it over. It can be undermined by water seeping through the ground or burnt if someone drops a lit match. **You have to watch it almost constantly, care for it incessantly**, lest it be suddenly destroyed.

Peace, too, requires this care and attention. We erect structures of peace with care, but they are all too easily blown over by the strong winds of group hatred and extremism, or undermined by the seeping waters of suspicion, or consumed by the fires of nationalistic self-righteousness. In order for the edifice of peace to remain standing, we have to be constantly on guard; **we cannot take it for granted that peace, once achieved, will automatically endure ...”**

Based on a teaching by Rabbi Marc Saperstein

<https://tinyurl.com/y5leq383>