

Value: אִמְצַ לֵב Ometz Lev

Caregiving Principle: Encouraging a sense of calm

The Hebrew phrase, אִמְצַ לֵב (*ometz lev*), translates to “**strength (אִמְצַ ometz) of the heart (לֵב lev)**” and often is translated as “courage” in colloquial English. Throughout this module, we are using אִמְצַ לֵב (*ometz lev*) to mean one’s “inner strength.” This phrase is found in Psalm 27, reminding us to look to God for strength.

קוּה אֶל־יְהוָה חֲזַק וַיֵּאֲמַץ לִבִּי וְקוּה אֶל־יְהוָה

Kaveh el-Adonai hazak v'ya'amez libecha v'kaveh el-Adonai

“Look to God. Be strong and strengthen your heart. Look to God!”

There are two action-oriented elements in the phrase, אִמְצַ לֵב (*ometz lev*):

- **Ometz means strength, so we first have to strengthen ourselves** – In order to use the power of *ometz lev*, we have to realize we have untapped reserves that can help us when our emotions run high – whether of anger, excitement, happiness or fright. Engaging our inner strength allows us to pause and take control of the behavioral choices we make next.
- **Lev means heart, so we then have to reach inward into our heart** – We must intentionally choose to use our inner strength. This means facing the things in life that may frighten us and, using appropriate coping mechanisms, to help calm ourselves and others. Genesis *Rabbah* (an ancient collection of *midrash*) tells a powerful story of how a person engaged their *ometz lev* in the face of perceived danger. The text says, “A person walking on the road saw a pack of dogs and felt afraid of them, so he sat down in their midst.” It is that inner strength that is at the heart of *ometz lev*.

Ometz lev is anchored in the second principle for caregivers working with people who have faced trauma - **calming**. To regulate one’s emotionality, one needs to have inner strength, i.e., strength of the heart, to recognize when big feelings are taking over and to identify the appropriate coping tools to help return to a regulated state. Referencing Maslow’s hierarchy of needs,¹ once a person’s physiological needs (food, water, air, shelter) are met, then safety needs must be taken care of, including one’s personal security, especially the ability to recognize and calm one’s big feelings.

Our module connects to the Enduring Understanding in clear ways:

- **If I am not for myself, who will be for me?** – We want to empower children to recognize when they are experiencing “Big Feelings” and to access tools/techniques that can facilitate a return to a state of calm using their own power of *ometz lev*. While all feelings are valid, all behaviors are not.
- **If I am only for myself, what am I?** – We want to empower children to look beyond themselves, to notice when others are dysregulated and may need support in remembering their own *ometz lev*. Empathy also plays a role here.
- **If not now, when?** – We want to empower children to take action for calming themselves in the moment, for regulating their emotions.

Throughout this module, learners discover different aspects of what *ometz lev* is and what it means to engage one’s *ometz lev*. They will define it, consider when to engage their *ometz lev*, discover tools and create plans!

¹ <https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571>

Note that there are five distinct weeks of learning offered in the overview chart, below (page 3). Depending on the timing of holidays and synagogue-related events, an educational program might choose to introduce only four of the sessions. While an ideal calendar would allow for the scheduling of each module without interruption, the scheduling choices are up to each director.

For a two-minute overview of this module
that orients teachers and parents to the learning,
click on this link:
<https://tinyurl.com/y6m5tobf>



OVERVIEW GRID

<p>Weekly Focusing Question</p>	<p>Mifgash (the session in which a <i>k'vutzah</i> of learners "meet" the week's focus)</p>	<p>Grades K-3 Activities (introduced via a subscription-type box)</p> <p>NOTE: Each of the five weeks stand on their own, but build on each other towards an understanding of Big Feelings and how they can be managed using <i>ometz lev</i>, one's inner strength.</p>	<p>Grades 4-6 Challenges (introduced via a challenge video)</p> <p>NOTE: Over the course of the five weeks, learners consider how one uses <i>ometz lev</i> to calm Big Feelings. Each week builds upon the last. During the first three weeks, learners create character and <i>ometz lev</i> cards to be used in a game. In the fourth and fifth weeks, they practice the skill of matching <i>ometz lev</i> tools to Big Feelings moments in their own lives.</p>
<p>Session 1: Why do we need <i>ometz Lev</i>?</p>	<p>Explore the concept of Big Feelings and begin to consider our ability to control our behavioral reactions to them.</p>	<p><i>In the mifgash, learners are introduced to a Jack-in-the-Box as an illustration of our reactions to Big Feeling moments – we can explode outwards, we can choose not do anything, or we can be intentional and careful about our next steps. This week, the youngest learners create a pop-up-box.</i></p> <p><u>In the box:</u> Small box; ribbon; wire; stickers; small finger puppet; small blank pieces of paper.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> Create a personal pop-out-box. Decorate it with different Big Feelings on the outside. Throughout the week, observe and identify 3 big feelings to write on the pieces of paper and put inside their box to pop out in different ways whenever it is opened.</p>	<p>Identify examples of Jewish people – literary and historical – who faced Big Feeling moments that either did (or could) benefit from engaging their <i>ometz lev</i>. Then, create gaming "character cards" for 2-3 of them.</p>

<p>Session 2: What is a Big Feelings moment? What is <i>ometz lev</i>?</p>	<p>Consider specific examples of Jewish leaders who faced “Big Feeling moments” that led to their use of <i>ometz lev</i> to make a good behavior choice.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> Large craft stick; a piece of cardstock on which one side has “אִמְצַלֵּב” printed on it, the other has a selection of emojis; glue dots.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> The learners fold the <i>ometz lev</i>/Big Feelings emoji sign in half – one side with the phrase <i>ometz lev</i> and the other side with emojis. Using the craft stick as a sign holder, they wrap the folded sign around the stick and attach the two with the glue dots.</p> <p>They then identify a time in the past week where they had BIG FEELINGS and create a short video. At the point in the story when Big Feelings are getting ready to boil over, they freeze and hold up the sign to illustrate stopping to tap into their <i>ometz lev</i> and also to consider the Big Feeling that has been engaged.</p>	<p>Practice identifying Big Feeling moments with the character cards created earlier – What choices would the characters have if they find themselves at a Big Feelings moment? Create a toolbox of <i>ometz lev</i> choices and non-<i>ometz lev</i> choices for at least one of the characters, using the provided card template. These choice cards will be used for game play at the next session.</p>
<p>Session 3: What are some <i>ometz lev</i> tools other people use? How do I use my <i>ometz lev</i> to identify the correct tool(s) to bring myself to a regulated state?</p>	<p>Introduce learners to different <i>ometz lev</i> tools they may access when facing a Big Feelings moment.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> Origami fortune teller template; <i>ometz lev</i> toolkit stickers.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> Create an <i>ometz lev</i> tool in the form of an origami fortune teller. Use the fortune teller to help pick a tool for various Big Feelings moments.</p>	<p>Play the game! Choose one of your character cards, select a randomized scenario, and shuffle to pick one of your choice cards. What happens to the character if they make this choice? Did the character make the right choice? Go back and choose a different choice card to play the scene out differently, or select a new scenario. Repeat as many times as desired.</p>

<p>Session 4: When do we need <i>ometz lev</i>?</p>	<p>Expand upon learners' understandings of when we need to use our <i>ometz lev</i> and the various <i>ometz lev</i> tools available.</p>	<p><u>In the box:</u> Glue stick; QR code to a photo editing website that will allow them to decorate/illustrate photos.</p> <p><u>The task:</u> Identify a personal Big Feelings moment and illustrate comic-book-style >> the moment and the choosing of an <i>ometz lev</i> tool.</p>	<p>Consider Big Feelings moments in relation to an <i>ometz lev</i> toolbox. Learners make a character card of themselves, along with <i>ometz lev</i> choice cards (3 <i>ometz lev</i> choices and 3 non-<i>ometz lev</i> choices).</p>
<p>Session 5: What will my <i>ometz Lev</i> plan be?</p>	<p>Teacher guides the learners through practicing an <i>ometz lev</i> plan to help them apply these skills in the future.</p>	<p>In the box: Clear plastic jar; bottle of "Softsoap;" liquid watercolor; glitter and/or large shaped confetti; permanent markers; "אִמֶּץ לֵב <i>ometz lev</i>" label.</p> <p>The task: Create and decorate an "Ometz Lev Jar" (a.k.a., a glitter jar). Explore different ways to use the jar throughout the week to help identify Big Feelings moments and then pick appropriate <i>ometz lev</i> tools.</p>	<p>Describe a scenario you've experienced or one you can imagine in which you needed <i>ometz lev</i>. Make a video similar to week 3 in which you tell the story, explaining the scenario and your choices - how would/did you use <i>ometz lev</i> (or not)?</p>

