



Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!

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Starting and Nurturing a *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* Group

Thank you for partnering with *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*

Your role is paramount to the success of the girls' *Rosh Hodesh* experience. We are here to help, so please call on us at any time.

STEPS FOR THE SUPERVISOR/GROUP LEADER

1. Select an **age group**.
2. Identify potential **meeting times and locations**.
3. Publicize the program and **recruit members**.
4. Invite girls and parents to an **Introductory Meeting**.
5. Establish and sustain **relationships with parents and girls** before the group begins and between meetings.
6. Attend the **Training Institute** and make the most of ongoing support.
7. Partner with **Moving Traditions** for the continued success of *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*

1. Select an age group

The program is designed for girls in grades 6–12, and you will determine which specific age group(s) you want to recruit. We recommend that the **range of ages not be too wide** and that **no more than two grades** be grouped together. Our experience has taught us that it is best to begin with a group that is in **either their pre- or post-bat mitzvah year**, as the bat mitzvah year is filled with engagements.

If you want a group that will continue for a number of years, we recommend that you **begin with grade six**. If they are to become *b'not mitzvah*, these girls are not yet busy with preparations and have more availability. Starting the year before their bat mitzvah ceremonies provides a better chance of keeping them involved, since they already have made a commitment and have felt the pleasure of being in a supportive group of girls.

Some communities also find success **beginning in eighth grade**, right after the bat mitzvah year, when girls are slightly more mature. If you can readily tap into an existing group of post-bat mitzvah girls, such as in a confirmation program, it may serve you well to do so. Research shows a dip in participation in Jewish life at this stage, and *Rosh Hodesh* can keep girls engaged and connected with your institution and with each other through a meaningful and engaging post-bat mitzvah Jewish experience.

2. Select meeting location and times

The space in which the girls gather should be **informal and intimate**, yet **ample** for approximately twelve girls to sit in a circle. It must offer **privacy** and be a place where **food and crafts will be welcome**. Everything does not have to take place in the same room. You may gather initially in one setting, and adjourn to another space for crafts or eating. It's a good idea to check the "Gathering Plan" preparation notes for any special monthly requirements (e.g., space for yoga). There are two models that have been successful: **home-based** and **institution-based**.

Home-based Groups

Home-based groups, which rotate the meetings among the girls' homes, provide inviting, hospitable environments. They foster the girls' sense of ownership of the group and commitment to its success. Host Girls can be asked to assume a variety of leadership roles, from phone calls to facilitation. Meeting in homes may require attention to socioeconomic differences among the girls and may present challenges related to family lifestyles, such as noise, parent or sibling intrusion, comfort with "mess," level of *kashrut*, or allergies to pets. If you are holding the first gathering in a home, you may not be able to confirm the location until three to five weeks in advance, when you have a few girls on board and have received a commitment from a host parent.

Institution-based Groups

Alternatively, your sponsoring institution may prefer to host the monthly gatherings in its own facility. This model can provide consistency for the Rosh Hodesh group and deepen the girls' relationship with the host institution. If you are meeting in an institutional setting, you may wish to pay extra attention to ritual and decorative features that will increase the sense of intimacy and ownership of the space. Girls can rotate being the "designated Host Girl," providing food, helping to set up the room, lighting the candle, and possibly facilitating part of the meeting.

Scheduling

Your choice of meeting time may intersect with your choice of location. For instance, institutions may have limited schedules when their buildings are open and appropriate rooms are available. Most groups meet one Sunday afternoon or evening a month, while others find a weekday afternoon or evening more amenable. Make sure that the time and place you pick is optimal for the majority of the girls who will be in your group. ***Do your best to schedule each meeting in close proximity to Rosh Hodesh and be consistent with day and time***—unless you need to adjust the schedule to avoid secular and religious holidays and competing events in the community.

Your objective should be to . . . stimulate interested girls and parents to find out more.

3. Publicize the program and recruit members

Your publicity objective should be to create wide **name recognition** for the program, create a “**buzz**” in the community, and **stimulate** interested girls and parents to find out more. Plan a **multi-pronged approach** to letting girls and their parents know about the program.

You can recruit girls using these strategies:

- Encourage word-of-mouth and peer outreach by present group members.
- Speak with mothers in adult Rosh Hodesh groups.
- Mail flyers and announcements using institutional mailing lists.
- Send announcements using institutional e-mail lists.
- Place articles in institutional/organizational newsletters (see sample press release on the “Recruit” page at www.roshhodesh.org/groupleader)
- Place listings and/or advertisements in organizational program guides.
- Post announcements on web sites.

In addition, community institutions may also offer you the opportunity to publicize through

- placing brochures and posters in community settings (JCCs, pizza shops, cafes, etc.).
- staffing a table at special events, such as community fairs.

Create a flyer, invitation, and/or letter that is simple and inviting. Sample letters and flyers are available on the group leaders’ web site as well as in this manual (p. 19-21). And **talk it up** to as many people as you can. Spread the word!

Emphasize Peer & Parent Outreach

Note that one effective, time-efficient way to get a group going is to find an **interested girl or core of girls** who will want to involve their friends. As you would expect, girls are more apt to attend if they know that their friends will be there. If there is an existing group in your area, asking current participants to do **peer outreach** can be very effective. **Parents** can also be great assets to recruitment. Find one or two parents who have age-appropriate girls to help you build the group.

4. Invite girls and parents to an Introductory Meeting: “A Taste of Rosh Hodesh”

We have found that an introductory girl-parent meeting is one of the most effective ways of obtaining a commitment from both the girls and their parents. This session provides information about the program and allows both to experience firsthand what a Rosh Hodesh gathering is like. (See the timeline and meeting outline p. 15-18.) **It is best to host this meeting in the Spring—before the girls go away for the summer.** Excite the girls and parents early and you won’t have to run after them later!



Personalize the invitations to the introductory meeting, hand-address the envelopes, and mail with attractive stamps. These steps may seem insignificant and time-consuming, but these touches will effectively distinguish the letter from junk mail and will signal to each girl that she is being personally invited to a special group.

Our experience supports publicizing the group to large numbers and inviting about 20 girls to the introductory girl-parent meeting. This usually becomes a group of 10-15 committed and excited girls for your ongoing group. It can take a few sessions for the group to “settle in” and a core group of steady girls to solidify. The group may choose to become closed at that point, or explore the inclusion of new members as the issue arises.

Follow-up

We strongly recommend that soon after a girl has committed to attend the group, you have a conversation with her parent(s). In addition to reviewing the expectations regarding meeting times, attendance, hosting, and costs, this will give you the opportunity to answer parental questions and address any concerns. It will also allow you to ask the important question, “**Is there anything I should know about your daughter?**” so that you can be made aware of concerns, such as *kashrut*, allergies, and any other religious, health, or social issues.

5. Establish and sustain relationships with parents and girls before the group begins and between meetings

Parents

Parent understanding and support of your *Rosh Hodesh* group is vital to the group’s success. Beyond the practicalities of driving the girls, paying for the group, and putting meetings on the family calendar, parents can support the mission and vision of *Rosh Hodesh* in important ways. When parents understand the group, they “spread the word” in the community for future groups, support institutional funding, reinforce concepts at home, and can be resources for you, as well.

Parents need to be informed about the nature and intent of the monthly gatherings and the expectations for their involvement. If your group meets in homes, it is particularly important that parents fully understand the group’s needs for privacy and appropriate spaces for food, craft projects, and candle rituals.

Follow-up communication to confirm dates and location of meetings is also important. The group leader should e-mail parents periodically with a summary of the last gathering. (The *At a Glance* section from each month can be found on our website, www.roshhodesh.org/groupleader, and used for an outline.) By focusing on the objectives, you can inform parents about the gatherings while respecting the group’s commitment to confidentiality.

Other ideas for connecting with parents include hosting a parent/daughter gathering, end of year celebration, or parent workshop. You might consider creating a parent advisory committee at your institution or setting up a liaison parent for your group.

Girls

The girls will grow to appreciate that this is **a group of their own**. (For many of them, this will be the first Jewish educational experience that they are choosing for themselves.) From the start, it is important that you convey to them that you are **partners** in establishing a unique, special, and valuable experience.

Before the introductory meeting, the group leader should **call each girl** and extend a personal invitation. Ask her about her hobbies and interests. Inquire if she has any friends who might also be interested in joining the group. Listen to the girls and learn about them right from the onset of the relationship.

This program is a unique model, different from their other experiences—let girls sense it from the start. *The medium is the message*. Create flyers and other recruitment materials that are colorful and girl-friendly and that reflect the fun experience they will have in their *Rosh Hodesh* group. Let the girls know you value their experiences by bringing thoughtfully prepared, high-quality supplies. Provide snacks that are both healthful and fun—and, by linking to the themes of the month, an experiential learning opportunity. Most of all: let the girls be themselves.

It may take several meetings for the group to bond and for friendships to form. You can help this process by cultivating the group between meetings. Group leaders have sent birthday cards, pictures of the previous meeting, articles of interest, and appropriate web site links to the girls. Be patient—we expect that over time your high expectations for the group will be fulfilled and all your nurturing efforts will bear fruit.

6. Attend the Training Institute and make the most of ongoing support

Our two-day summer Training Institute is required for all new group leaders and recommended for supervisors. It is consistently rated by participants as a “superior professional development” opportunity. Our professional trainers are knowledgeable and passionate about *Rosh Hodesh*, are excited to meet you, and are committed to working with you to ensure that your *Rosh Hodesh* experience will be wonderful—for you, your institution, and most importantly, the girls. You will meet other supervisors and group leaders from around the country and will gain proficiency in

- using the *Rosh Hodesh* materials;
- facilitating groups;
- dealing with issues facing adolescent girls;
- marketing and recruitment.

Rosh Hodesh is committed to your success! We encourage you to take advantage of the consultation and support we offer through our group leaders' web site, our Facebook page for group leaders, direct e-mail, and personal contact with our staff.

7. Partner with Moving Traditions for the continued success of Rosh Hodesh

Rosh Hodesh is the product of many years of writing, field-testing, and editing—made possible by Moving Traditions' staff and Board and by the national funders committed to the program and its mission. It is also a living, dynamic program that is being expanded and updated every year. Please let us know if you run into any difficulties so that we can help you resolve them.

You are a crucial link in the chain of this program's continuity. Every time you report a wonderful experience, give us feedback that will allow us to improve the curriculum, or post an idea on the Facebook page, you are making a contribution to the program and helping to support your colleagues and girls across the continent. Send us pictures of your girls, and share both your challenges and successes!

Finally, you are our links to the girls and their families. We will be reaching out to you at times during the year to ask for your help in acquiring contact information. We need this important information for our own self-evaluation and reporting – and we thank you in advance for your assistance!