

Moving Traditions 2010 Training Institute

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! Group Leader Certification

Welcome to *Moving Traditions*

Who we are...

Moving Traditions inspires women and men, boys and girls to engage more deeply with Judaism. Gender serves as our framework because it shapes the way our culture defines who we are and can become. Gender continues to be critical to Jewish text, spiritual practice, education and participation. For Moving Traditions, the gender lens expands Judaism's ability to help each individual experience his or her full humanity.

The Moving Traditions logo incorporates the Hebrew word *masorot* or "traditions" because every generation reshapes Jewish tradition. Our contemporary awareness of gender and diversity calls us to move Judaism forward while remaining true to its profoundly moving traditions.

What we do...

Through *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*, a program of Moving Traditions, we provide an experience that gives power to girls, enabling them to overcome negative messages from popular culture, develop healthy self-images and make strong, solid choices. We tie Jewish traditions, values and ritual to real-world issues, like body image, relationships, stress and communication. We offer meaningful, intellectually challenging Jewish learning – so that girls remain excited by and firmly attached to Judaism at a time when many turn away.

Why Girls need *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!*

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! is the first and most successful Jewish program to pro-actively address the following challenges:

1. Girls are dissatisfied with and drop out of Jewish programming after bat mitzvah.
2. Jewish institutions struggle to attract and maintain teen participation.
3. Girls struggle to keep a strong self-concept and make healthy choices in adolescence

In spite of much progress in the move towards gender equality, and improved quality of life for each gender, adolescent girls today must travel in a teen culture that makes risky and dangerous values and behaviors—at ever earlier ages—seem normal.

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! offers girls the chance to be enveloped in an alternative culture that will help them counter the media/popular culture's unhealthy messages. Girls need rituals and communal experiences to strengthen their resistance to the media-based culture that directs them to disconnect from their bodies.

Girls are hungry for soul food—nourishment for their connections to peers, older women, and God, to heartfelt values, to beliefs and values which deepen their sense of being connected to a family, a religion, a community of good people who are trying to make the world a better place.

Becoming a *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* Facilitator

You were selected to facilitate a *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* group because of the skills and character traits you possess. You bring your lifetime of experiences to this task and our training seeks to inspire you to share your talents as well as open your mind to new approaches.

As facilitator, you help the group develop its unique culture, one that promotes bonding, safety, free expression of ideas and feelings, and positive Jewish identity. You wear multiple hats—as **coordinator**, **informal educator**, **role model**, and **process facilitator**. Each of these important roles is explored below.

Coordinator

As the logistics coordinator, you determine the time and date of the meeting and arrange for the location and necessary supplies. You will be collaborating with your supervisor, and both the girls and their parents. By reaching out via e-mail, notes and calls you will be fostering relationships with the parents and the girls as well as deepening their connection to the group.

Informal Jewish Educator

Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing! gatherings create perfect opportunities for Jewish learning. With an experiential, participant-centered approach, learning happens through guided discovery, rather than didactic teaching.

Dr. Joseph Reimer, an expert in Jewish identity and education from Brandeis University, has outlined six characteristics of a great Jewish experiential learning program. A successful *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* gathering reflects these traits:

1. The program is well prepared.
2. The participants feel comfort and trust.
3. Participants identify with the group and feel that they belong.
4. Participants feel challenged, stretched, and engaged in the experience.
5. Participants have time to reflect.
6. Participants have time to act.

In your role as an informal educator, you create the opportunity for the intended life lessons to emerge naturally from participation in and processing of the shared activity. Far more effective than “the moral of the story” pronouncements, good questions can help the girls themselves draw the connections between Jewish values and the activity at hand. Through this process, you will set up and support an unfolding “aha” moment of self-discovery or new understanding that is revealed rather than imposed.

Don't be concerned if you are not a walking encyclopedia of Jewish knowledge and practice. The monthly gathering plans provide you with the background you need to be a resource to the girls. The activities themselves blend fun and personal exploration with the cycle of the Jewish calendar, toward a goal of enhanced self-esteem and a positive Jewish identity.

Role Model

As facilitator, you are a role model for embracing the delights and difficulties of Jewish womanhood. Your words and actions speak volumes to the girls in your group. Modeling your ability to risk, question, share, laugh, empathize, and connect will inspire them to do the same. Valuing yourself while respecting others, speaking out yet being willing to listen, being honest about the struggles and joys of women today, seeking guidance from others and from your heritage as you find your own voice, always striving to learn and grow—these are at the heart of the life lessons which you can embody for the young women in your group.

Experiential Group Facilitator

Our approach fosters self-expression, analytical thinking, and the validation of individual experience. The method of facilitation is experiential, meaning that key concepts are designed to be solicited, rather than imposed. Discussions, reflective writing, dramatic improvisations, craft-making, and traditional and creative rituals lead participants on a journey of discovery and self awareness. On the way, they are guided and enriched by Jewish teaching.

The program is designed to call upon and develop all of a girl's multiple intelligences. We have varied the modalities from month to month, with an eye to overall diversity and balance. Regardless of the modality, the most important underlying values are

- process, not product.
- creativity, not repetition.
- curiosity, not assumptions.

As a facilitator, you can create a nonjudgmental atmosphere that frees the girls to see that learning is accessible and that their own ideas are valuable. These experiences build the girls' confidence in their own ideas, personal expression, and individuality and provide girls a valuable direct experience of independence.

In creating something—a craft, an improvisational role, a poem—girls get to discover something about themselves that may surprise them. Most importantly, it's coming from themselves, not from an external source. What we discover ourselves is what we remember best—and helps mold who and how we are in the world.

Thank you for taking the time to read this material to prepare for our training. We look forward to learning together and wish you the best as you begin your journey as a *Rosh Hodesh: It's a Girl Thing!* group leader or supervisor.