



Enjoy Your Gift from PJ Library Tzedakah Box and Kindness Cards

Why this gift?

Harold Grinspoon is passionate about giving tzedakah. Harold gathers his spare coins at the end of each week before Shabbat, and deposits them into one of his many tzedakah boxes. (Tzedakah boxes come in all sizes and shapes!) When the boxes are full, he chooses where the money will go. Harold hopes that these colorful tzedakah boxes will inspire families to create their own unique tzedakah habits and traditions. Most young children have a hazy understanding of money and how it can be used to help others, so Harold has tucked a box of PJ Kindness Card Games into each tzedakah box. PJ Kindness Cards in the classroom can help teach additional ways, beyond the giving of money, of being a mensch (a kind, caring, responsible person). The cards depict simple actions with illustrations from beloved PJ Library books that even very young children can perform in order to help others, such as offering guests a snack, giving away outgrown clothes, and making soup for a sick friend. Use the color-coded cards to play variations of traditional card games, such as GoFilte Fish and Mensch Match. Like PJ Library books, the overarching goal of the tzedakah box and the Kindness Cards is to increase the amount of Jewish discussion and action in the classroom and the home.



Discuss the Jewish values and vocabulary with one another

Righteous giving / *Tze-da-kah* - צְדָקָה

Acts of loving kindness / *Ge-mi-lut cha-sa-dim* - גְּמִלוֹת חֶסֶדִים

Doing the right thing (Being a mensch) / *Derech erez* - דֶּרֶךְ אֶרֶץ

Righteous giving / Tzedakah. Tzedakah is often translated as charity, but the concept of tzedakah goes beyond that. Charity is seen as going over and above the call of duty, while giving tzedakah is a *mitzvah* - a commandment. The rabbis of classical Judaism say tzedakah is tied to giving thanks, and its importance makes it equal to all other mitzvot combined. For children, tzedakah might be explained as an expanded version of sharing. Jewish sages say it is our job to make sure the world's resources are distributed evenly amongst all of the people on Earth who need them, ensuring that all people can lead happy and healthy lives. Tzedakah can be giving money, giving one's time, or teaching a skill.

Acts of Loving Kindness / Gemilut chasadim. The second teaching in *Pirkei Avot*, a collection of rabbinic commentaries on ethics, states: “The world stands on three things: on Torah, divine service, and on acts of loving kindness” (1:2). The Talmud, the authoritative book of Jewish law and custom, suggests tzedakah (righteous giving) and acts of loving kindness outweigh all of the other mitzvot in the Torah, and that we should reap reward from kindnesses we do. Some rabbis interpret this to mean the world would cease to exist without kindness. Our reward is the continued existence of the world as well as the deep relationships our kindnesses to others generate.

Doing the right thing (being a mensch) / Derech erez. The concept of acting with *derech erez* means showing decent, polite, civilized behavior, i.e. being a *mensch* - a good human being. The literal translation of the Hebrew term *derech erez* means “path of the land” and is often referred to as “the way of the world.” We think of this expression as we make choices that take us along a “right path” in life and consider the impact our actions have on the people around us. Examples of this behavior include contributing to the community, welcoming guests, and basic good manners. According to the Midrash, an ancient collection of commentaries on the Bible, *derech erez* comes before Torah. In other words, our most important task in life is to become a good and kind human being.

Imagine your community living these Jewish values.

Using the Cards in the Classroom

- ☆ **Use the cards to help children form friendship-pairs.** Distribute one card per child and ask the children to find the one child in the room who holds a card that matches their own. Once the children have found their partner, ask the newly formed pairs to work together on a cooperative, mitzvah **art project**. For example, ask each pair to create a get well card that can be sent to a resident of a local nursing home or to a classmate who is ill.
- ☆ **Play Mensch Bingo.** Use the PJ Kindness Cards and a photo copier to create a “Mensch Bingo” game. Arrange 6-8 different PJ Kindness Cards face-down on a copy machine, cover with a blank piece of paper on top of the cards, and copy. As you prepare additional bingo game cards, be sure to use 6-8 **different** pictures per card). Place three or four of the newly created Mensch Bingo game cards on a **provocation table** along with individual PJ Kindness Cards nearby. Working alone or with a partner, children can fill up their bingo game cards by locating a matching PJ Kindness Card and placing it on top of the image displayed on the game card. Challenge children to see how quickly they can fill their bingo game cards.
- ☆ **Create an Honorable Mensch-en Chart.** Divide a poster into six or more rectangles. Label each area with the name of one the values that appears on the top of the PJ Kindness Cards, such as Be Kind to Animals or Take Care of the Earth. Extra squares might be called “Be a Mensch” or any other value you choose. Write notes about acts of kindness that you see enacted in the classroom. Read a few of the notes aloud during **morning meeting**.



Bridging Home and School

Family Game Night and Pajama Party

Invite families to come to school for a PL Library read-a-thon and game night. Everyone came in their PJ's. Serve pizza – and remember to welcome your guests!

Family Engagement at Home

Kindness Book and Photo Album

Ask families to take photos of their children engaged in an act of kindness. When each child brings their photo to school, ask the child to share the story of their photo and write it down in your developing kindness book. You might choose to send this book home with children on a rotating basis to spread kindness ideas throughout your community.



Share

 your stories and experiences with everyone.

What happened?

How can the learning go deeper?

Tell us a story... about children doing acts of kindness

Help children recognize their developing mensch skills, by telling and retelling little stories of how Jewish values come to life. For example: *Once upon a time in our classroom, Jessica showed us two acts of kindness at once! When Noah came to school, Jessica ran to the door and said, "I'm so glad you are here today!" That's hachnasat orchim (welcoming guests) and l'hiyot chaver (being a friend).*

Then share with all of us on our private Facebook group page! <http://pjfor.me/pjgts-facebook>

More

 resources and websites for inspiration

PJ Library Tzedakah Project PJLibrary.org/tzedakah

PJ Goes to School Pinterest board <http://www.pinterest.com/pjgts/tzedakah-books-and-activities/>

PJ Library Pinterest board <http://www.pinterest.com/pjlibrary/celebrate-tzedakah/>

