

Welcoming Each Other at Congregation Bet Haverim

Congregation Bet Haverim strives to welcome partners and visitors with a spirit of openness and inclusivity. To help create the warm and friendly congregation we aspire to be, our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee developed a guide to support more thoughtful interactions with one another. Our goal is to ensure all CBH partners, friends, and visitors actively experience a sense of belonging at CBH. In offering suggestions, and not rules, we hope that small shifts in language and actions can lead to more meaningful connections with one another.

WHEN IN DOUBT ... REACH OUT!

Introduce yourself. Demonstrate interest in others. Notice your own assumptions. Respect boundaries.

Engaging with a person you don't recognize or whose name you don't remember...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Doing nothing. Asking "Is this your first time here?" Asking "Are you new?"	Say "I'm not sure if we've met before. My name is ____." Say "I forget names sometimes. I'm ____." Ask "How is your day going?" or "What did you think of today's service/event/activity?"	It can feel alienating to be ignored or to have someone assume you are new. The person may come to CBH a lot, but attend different events than you do.

Engaging with a person you don't know who may not appear White...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Assuming someone is not Jewish (or that they are Jewish!) based on their physical appearance. Saying "you don't look Jewish" either explicitly with words or implicitly with non-verbal communication. Asking "Are you Jewish?" or "When did you convert?" or "Did you grow up Jewish?"	Say "I'm not sure if we've met before. My name is ____." Offer a prayer book (or supplemental readings, etc) and be friendly.	There are Jews of all races, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. It can be alienating to make assumptions based on appearances. People of color have experienced bias in Jewish communities and have been treated like they "don't belong."

Engaging a person you don't know with a visible disability...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Saying something that leads with a focus on the person's disability. Providing assistance that is unneeded or unwanted.	Start by introducing yourself: "I'm not sure if we've met before. My name is ____." Engage in conversation without making assumptions about any limitations or help that might be needed.	Leading with an introduction focuses on the individual, whereas leading with an assumption or offer of help focuses on the disability. Have a helpful attitude (toward all partners, not just those with a visible disability!) but focus on the person, not any limitations you perceive them to have.

This Welcoming Each Other guide was adapted with permission from Kol Tzedek Synagogue in Philadelphia.

The CBH DEI Committee recognizes that inclusive language and norms are continually evolving. We invite the feedback of our community to assist in making this living document one which fully supports the diversity of our CBH congregation (deiatcbh@googlegroups.com).

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When you don't know what gender pronouns to use for someone...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Asking "Are you a boy or a girl?" Saying "He's doing ____" (when you don't know if the person uses "he" pronouns).	Consider if it's important for you to know the individual's gender pronouns at all. If you need to use a pronoun, ask which ones they use or use they/them until you know the pronouns they use. Introduce yourself and offer: "By the way, I use ____ pronouns." This creates an opening for that person to share their own pronouns with you.	It's respectful to think through whether you need to use a pronoun with someone or if your own discomfort with not knowing someone's gender identity is driving your curiosity.

When you use the wrong gender pronoun...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Saying "She is leading services. Oh my goodness... HE! HE is leading services. Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm really trying. It's just so hard for me."	Say "She is leading services. Excuse me, he is leading services." And then go on using the person's correct pronouns.	Drawing attention to your error makes it about you, when it's really about respecting the other person. Try to work on it in private with someone who has agreed to help.

Connecting across religious practices...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Assuming someone who is wearing a kippah or tallit doesn't need a prayer book. Assuming an interfaith family needs some kind of additional support. Assuming someone in a hijab is in the wrong place or needs assistance.	Say "I'm not sure if we've met before. My name is ____." Offer a prayer book (or supplemental readings, etc) and be friendly.	CBH Partners and guests have a wide variety of religious practices and customs. Greet people "as they are." Try not to make assumptions, or notice when you are making assumptions and choose to be curious instead.

Connecting with physical touch...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Expecting a hug or handshake. Just "going for it" (when you are greeting adults OR children). Saying things like: "I can't help it - I'm just a hugger" and then engaging in unwanted physical touch.	Ask "Are you in the mood for a hug?" or "Can I offer you a hug?" Recognize that there are a variety of ways to greet people. Children, in particular, may prefer non-physical and non-verbal methods as they grow into social norms. Respect boundaries and personal space with your posture and proximity to others.	Asking before physically touching someone demonstrates respect and is part of creating a culture of consent. Individuals communicate in many ways, including with words and physical touch, but also with their eyes and smiles. We all have different comfort levels (and, in some cases, religious/cultural practices) around physical touch.

Connecting across class differences...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Asking "What do you do for a living?" Asking "Where did you go to college?"	Ask "What types of activities do you like to do at CBH?" or "What interests you or makes you curious these days?"	Not all life trajectories are the same!

Making announcements about a social justice issue...

Avoid...	Instead...	Why?
Saying "I know we all agree that it's vital that ____ happen" or "If you care about this, you'll ____."	Say "Some CBH Partners are doing ____ and we hope you'll consider joining us" or "This matters to me because ____."	While we share common community values, the way we interpret or act upon those values varies.