

A Letter to Colleagues: **Adopting Positive Judaism in Your Community**

Dear rabbis, cantors, educators, and Jewish communal professionals,

Positive Judaism is not a new movement or new institution. Positive Judaism is a platform that can be adopted and personalized by you for the individuals, families, communities, and organizations you serve. I'm confident that you will be successful if you keep their happiness and well-being at the top of your agenda.

The three theories of well-being I have focused upon in this book have been proved to raise the level of authentic happiness in the lives of individuals and communities. Focusing on PERMA (positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment), character strengths, and the broaden-and-build concept will teach people how to live their best lives in the five areas of life (relationships, health, community, money, and work). This will increase well-being for all those you influence and will make Judaism relevant and compelling in the twenty-first century.

I believe there have been three key drivers for engagement in Jewish life in the last century: (1) Holocaust memory and anti-Semitism; (2) support for the State of Israel; and (3) the perceived threat of intermarriage (which I do not believe is actually a threat to Jewish continuity). These three motivators still have value. It is important to know history so that we will not repeat mistakes of the past. It is important that the State of Israel exists as a safe haven for Jews. It is important that we positively support all families who want to be part of the Jewish people, warmly welcoming spouses and anyone who wishes to live a Jewish life.

While all of this is a given, my experience has been that most Generation Y Millennials and Generation Z Centennials are far less motivated

by these ideas than their parents or grandparents are. None of these ideas are compelling *enough* in the twenty-first century to inspire lifelong Jewish engagement, because the issues and challenges we and our communities face today are quite new and different.

Today, people are looking for a deeper meaning to their lives. They want to live a positive life. They want to live well, enjoy life, thrive, and flourish. Helping people address, consider, and toil with these questions in their lives is what makes religion valuable and compelling. Positive Judaism answers the question “Why be Jewish?” It’s not the only answer, but it’s very persuasive, because it deals with optimal living, well-being, and happiness.

When Positive Judaism becomes the communal framework, I believe the result will be increased positive emotion, increased civic engagement, improved relationships, and accelerated human advancement among individuals and families. People and communities will be on a path toward greater resilience, optimism, and diversity. They will be able to learn new lessons from hardship, experience work as a calling, act and think with purpose, strengthen their relationships, and act generously. I believe this is our greatest opportunity: to bring positivity, happiness, and well-being to humanity and to the world. This is our journey forward.

In the sacred words of the Book of Proverbs, never forget the value of positivity and happiness in your life, “for they will bestow on you length of days, years of life and well-being.”¹⁹⁷

Today uv’rachah, thank you for your service to the Jewish people. May you continue to impact the lives of your students and communities with positivity, happiness and well-being.

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