

## CAN THE VALUE OF DIGNITY DRIVE OUR DIGITAL HABITS?

### Overview

This resource unpacks the issue of **Digital Overload** through the value of **Human Dignity**.

### At-a-Glance

This resource provides an opportunity to engage with the value of human dignity in the context of the digital world in which we live. It presents a Jewish angle on what human dignity means, maintaining that each and every person is inherently worthy of honor and dignity, even when they are sitting on the other side of a screen. Learners will engage in exercises to assess the reasons why they make the digital choices and representations that they do, which may be at odds with maintaining one's dignity. It concludes with an opportunity to sensitize ourselves to the dignity and honor of others, and prompts us to consider how increased consciousness of the human dignity of all people may drive our digital habits and choices for the better.



### MATERIALS AND SET-UP

#### Time estimate:

45-55 minutes

#### Best Uses:

- As a full group or in pairs
- For a reflective exercise with a practical takeaway

#### Materials Needed:

- Digital Device or printed version to read the letter "**Before You Press Send**"
- Digital Device for optional Take Action prompt – "**Letter to Future Me**"
- Pens and print-outs for Make Meaning/Take Action prompt



## FRAME THE ISSUE (10 MINUTES)

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**There are times when we have all shared particular content and behave in certain ways online knowing full well that it will be unflattering or embarrassing – to ourselves or to others. Why do we still share it? (*Open for responses.*)**

There is something about the nature of digital platforms that somehow makes it a bit easier to engage in a way that we wouldn't necessarily do in person. Recalling who sits on the other side of the screen and how to engage with them with dignity is a challenge that is increasing in scope and intensity as we move further and further towards platforms where anonymity reigns.

### **For Discussion:**

- ▷▷ Have you ever shared something online and then immediately deleted it? What prompted you to take it back?
- ▷▷ When have you felt that your own human dignity has been diminished by online interactions and content? If you feel comfortable doing so, explain the details of the situation.

### **Conclude this Section**

In the modern world, technological devices are in many ways extensions of ourselves. If we know that sharing particular content or behaving in certain ways online diminishes one's dignity why do we still do it? What compels us? The question for us to explore is how can increased awareness of one's human dignity drive our technological behaviors and choices?



## ANCHOR IN JEWISH WISDOM (15 MINUTES)

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**The Hebrew language is layered with meaning and allusions, and as such the concept of human dignity can be appreciated through the lens of how we refer to it in Hebrew. Share the following about the Hebrew words for “human dignity.”**

The Torah teaches us that humans – no matter their gender, race, color or abilities – are all created *B'tzelem Elokim*, in the image of God. As such, we are inherently worthy. In Hebrew, this value is called *kevod habriyot* – the honor and dignity of all people.

The word in Hebrew for honor, *kavod*, is related to the word for weight and heaviness (heavy = *kaveid* in modern Hebrew).

The value and concept of *kavod habriyot* then, is related to giving weight to the presence of another human being.

### **Reflect in pairs ask:**

- ▷▷ From this Jewish values perspective, what resonances does “human dignity” hold?
- ▷▷ What does it mean to give ourselves and others the “weight” we deserve?
- ▷▷ When we make light of things, how does that diminish human dignity?

### **Conclude this section by leading into the values exploration and posing the question:**

Let's explore a little more deeply the value of human dignity using the idea of “weighty” or “worthy” as a guide. How might we be able to do, say and share the things we really want to do online and still hold the value of human dignity front and center?



## ACTIVITY (10 MINUTES)

In this activity you will have the opportunity to take a few minutes and assess some trends in the usage of your digital devices and how they do/do not reflect your own sense of holding human dignity as a value.

- ▶▶ Take out your phones and select one platform to scroll through. Find at least two posts – they can have been posted by anyone - (images, tweets, videos), that in your mind diminish the dignity of either the subject of the post, or the person posting it.
- ▶▶ Turn to the person sitting next to you and share why you selected those posts and in what ways they diminish someone’s human dignity. Each partner should share.
- ▶▶ Now, together as a pair, try to come up of a reason *why* the person posting did what they did, even as it diminishes the dignity of another. What did they gain from doing so?
- ▶▶ Now, turn this activity to yourself and return to your phone for a moment of reflection. Scroll through or think of a time when you posted, commented or shared something that diminished your *own* sense of human dignity. Why did you do it?

Given the speed with which we interact with our devices, we are not always afforded the time to sit back, take stock and assess what we write, the ways we present ourselves, and how we interact with others. Human dignity may be the furthest thing from our minds as we try to look good, defend our beliefs, show support for friends, and share ideas widely. As we become more aware of our digital behaviors, we can also remind ourselves to consider whether our actions reflect the dignity we wish to assign to ourselves and others.



## MAKE MEANING & TAKE ACTION (10 MINUTES)

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Use the prompts below for an opportunity to think about human dignity as it relates to the choices we make online.

- ▶▶ [Click here](#) to read a letter called “Before you press send.”
- ▶▶ After reading the letter, think about a time when you had a strong negative reaction in the digital world. This could be a way dignity was lost for yourself or for someone else. Write about it in the space below.
- ▶▶ Now, write a version of the letter above. You can write it either to your past self, or to the person you have harmed on <https://www.futureme.org/> and schedule a time in the future to re-read and check your progress.



## CLOSE WITH INTENTION (5 MINUTES)

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In the exploration we have just experienced, we took a contemporary issue – digital engagement with the world – and explored it through the value of human dignity. Doing so offers a way for us to think about what drives our online behavior, and the reasons why we present ourselves and interact with others the way we do. Today’s conversation provided a chance for us to explore how conscious we are of the human dignity of all people, even as we sit in front of a screen. Sensitizing ourselves to human dignity as a value, allows us to say and share the things we really want to do online while still holding the worth, respect and value of others before us at all times.

**Go around the room and ask everyone who wants to share a reaction to one of the following prompts:**

- ▶▶ As a result of this session, I now think differently about .....
- ▶▶ To sensitize myself to the value of human dignity even while engaging with others from behind a screen, I will now ...