



Experiential Learning Initiative

40–60–Minute Learning Experience

After engaging your participants in these learning activities, watch one of the videos listed in the video viewing section below, together. Then use the applicable discussion and reflection questions for a final conversation and wrap-up to the program.

Before beginning, check out our [Facilitator's Guide](#), which explains how to use this learning activity as a set induction prior to watching the video.

Participants will explore the concept of taking initiative. What does it mean to take initiative? What qualities are needed to take initiative? Does taking initiative need to happen on a grand scale or can it be done on a small scale too? Through activities and discussion, participants will deepen their understanding of initiative and consider how they can take more initiative in their own lives.



Activities (20–30 min)

Supplies: Signs for around the room – Aleph, Bet, Gimel and Dalet, blue tape; pens and post-it notes.

1. Four Corners Game (8-10 min)

- a. Hang signs around the room – Aleph, Bet, Gimel and Dalet.
- b. Explain that there will be three rounds of this activity. For each round the facilitator will read a statement with four possible endings, each one corresponding to Aleph, Bet, Gimel or Dalet.
- c. Ask participants to stand under the sign that best completes the sentence, in their opinion.
- d. Once they are under that sign, read a discussion prompt and have them find 2-3 people under that sign to share the prompt with.
- e. Have everyone return to the center for the next statement.

Statement 1: This word best describes the value that you feel is most critical in taking initiative:

- Aleph = Integrity
- Bet = Honesty
- Gimel = Truthfulness
- Dalet = Respect of Others

Turn to those around you and share one initiative value (any) you try to exhibit.

Statement 2: This word describes the initiator that I look up to:

- Aleph = Powerful
- Bet = Confident
- Gimel = Creative
- Dalet = Consensus-Builder

Turn to those around you and share what type of initiator you admire the most and why.

Statement 3: What characteristic is most important in a person who takes initiative:

- Aleph = Compassionate
- Bet = Energetic
- Gimel = Knowledgeable

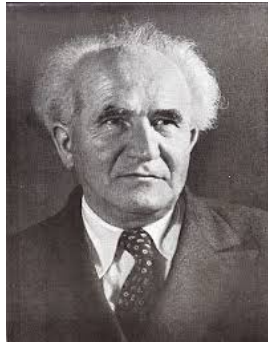


- Dalet = Team-oriented

Turn to those around you and share one skill you think is critical for an initiator to have.

2. Who's Who in Initiative

- Divide participants into groups of 3-5. Give each group a copy of these pictures of famous people (you can write the person's name on the print-out):



(David Ben Gurion)



(Rosa Parks)



(Steve Jobs)



(J.K. Rowling)



(Abraham Lincoln)



- b. Have each group make sure they are familiar with the person's basic bio, either from prior knowledge or googling what they are known for.
- c. In groups, discuss:
 - i. Which person would you associate most with taking initiative?
 - ii. Is it more impressive to take initiative in one certain field (politics, social action, technology) than another?
 - iii. Which of these people do you most admire? Why?
 - iv. Which of these people sacrificed the most (to the best of your knowledge) to get to where they got? Does this factor into how you think of an initiator?
- d. Bring the whole group back together and compare answers. Did different groups reach different conclusions?



Processing: Grade 8–Adult (10–15 min)

- What drives a person to take initiative in a given situation?
- Is a person born a doer/initiator, or is this a learned trait?
- In what area of your life do you take the most initiative? Is there an area in which you'd like to do more?
- Who in your life stands out to you as someone who takes initiative? Would you like to be more like that person?
- Does volunteering to pass out papers in class or erase the whiteboard use the same quality as organizing a school clothing drive? Does the scale of the initiative-taking matter?
- Shammai the Sage would say: "Say little and do a lot" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:16). What do you think he meant by this? How does it apply to taking initiative?

Additional Processing: Grade 11–Adult

- Is taking initiative always a good thing? Are there times when it's better to take a step back?
- Has your taking initiative ever led to failure? What was that experience like?
- If you were to be known as an initiator in one field, what would it be? How can you get there?



Video Viewing and Post-Video Reflection (15–20 min)

Herzl: The Zionist Dream of a Jewish State

- In 1897, Herzl famously said, “Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word—which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly—it would be this: At Basel, I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, certainly in fifty, everyone will know it.” Evaluate whether you think Herzl’s prediction was folly and fantasy or grounded and possible.
- Herzl was rejected time and again about his vision for Zionism and the idea that to solve antisemitism, the Jewish people would need to develop their own state, but he persevered. In fact, Baron Edmond de Hirsch said to him, “You are an intelligent man but you have such fantastic brain waves.” This, however, did not deter Herzl. In what ways can you incorporate Herzl’s perseverance, even if you are rejected a few times, to resiliently push through?
- When processing the impact Herzl had on the world and the challenges he went through, which quality of Herzl do you want to incorporate into your own life, and which qualities are you less inclined to incorporate?

The Women of Zionism

- Several of these women gave up comfortable homes in Europe and America to move to pre-state Palestine and live in much tougher conditions. What do you think drove them to do so? What gave them the strength to put their Zionist dreams into action?
- If you could meet any of these women, who would you like to meet and why? What would you speak to her about?
- Golda Meir is Israel’s only female prime minister so far. The video states that since Golda did not stress women’s issues in particular, “feminism in Israel could have asked more of Golda Meir.” Do you agree with this? Should she have “done more” for women specifically, or does her role as prime minister and treating gender as a non-issue serve as a form of feminism in itself?



The Kibbutz: Israel's Collective Utopia

- The kibbutz had such a powerful group effect, without which overcoming challenges of being without parents, without a set country and often having denied God, would be too difficult. How did the kibbutz seek to bring everyone together and become a microcosm of what the state would try to become?
- Amos Oz Writes: "For all its disadvantages, [the kibbutz] is the least bad, the least unkind, that I have seen anywhere.... The kibbutz is the only attempt in modern times to separate labor from material reward and this attempt is, in Martin Buber's phrase, 'an exemplary non-failure.' The kibbutz is the only attempt to establish a collective society, without compulsion, without repression, and without bloodshed or brainwashing. It is also, in retrospect, a unique attempt, for better or for worse, to reconstruct or revive the extended family... the loss of which may turn out to be the greatest loss in modern life." When you think of the words, "an exemplary non-failure," how is the kibbutz movement a fascinating example of such an idea?
- If you were moving to Israel, would the kibbutz collectivist life, Tel Aviv cosmopolitanism or the history of Jerusalem draw you in the most?

The Hebrew Language Revival

- Eliezer Ben-Yehuda said: "Jews cannot become a living nation – am chai – without returning to their ancestral language – lashon ha'avot [using it] in everyday discourse, from old to young...in all facets of life, at all hours, days and night." Do you agree with his assessment about the critical nature of the Jews using Hebrew as a tool to become a living nation?
- Why was it SO important for Ben-Yehuda to revive the Hebrew language? Do you think he went too far in his dedication, or was it necessary in order to effect change?
- Zionist leader [Menachem Ussishkin](#) was candid in his description of Eliezer Ben Yehuda, saying, "The people need a hero, so we've given them one." Essentially, he was arguing that the revival of modern Hebrew for the Jewish people required much more than Eliezer Ben Yehuda. From watching this video, do you agree with this assessment? Why do people need heroes to galvanize a movement?



Tel Aviv: Israel's Cultural and Financial Capital

- In many ways, Tel Aviv is the realization of Zionism in the most explicit way, an innovative renewal of Jewish life in its traditional and historic land. Do you see innovation and traditionalism in conflict or as complements to one another?
- In Tel Aviv, one of the people Ari Shavit interviewed in My Promised Land said he “believes that the party-now scene is more relevant than the [Peace Now](#) movement.” Why might Israel be more interested in partying than pursuing peace at this point? What does it tell us about Israeli culture?
- Tel Aviv is a thriving international city, in competition with Paris, New York and London. It is the [fifth most visited city](#) in the Middle East and Africa. [TimeOut](#) calls it the “contemporary hub of Israel, the cultural capital, a culinary mecca and a beach bliss.” One might view this as a remarkable achievement of Zionism. Others might ask why the Jewish state should care about this. What do you think?

Weird Ways Israel Won its War of Independence

- In Israel's early years, what it lacked in resources it made up for in creativity. Generally speaking, what yields greater results: resourcefulness and ingenuity, or sheer resources (money, manpower, etc.)?
- Of the stories described in this video, do you connect more to the story of the Davidka or the story of the Burma road, and why?
- Why did the Israelis name their weapon “Davidka”? What does that say about their own self-image?



Israeli Nobel Laureates

- Why do you think it is that this tiny country has managed to win the world's most prestigious prize several times over? More broadly, Jews around the world have won 22.5% of Nobel Prizes, though they make up just 0.2% of the world's population. How do you explain this?
- What does it really mean to win a Nobel Prize? Why is it such a source of pride for the individual and his or her country?
- Since medieval times, Jews would be called the "people of the book," or ahl al-kitab, which was a name Muslims used to use for followers of monotheism who were devoted to the "Book." Yet many early Zionists were not happy with the bookishness associated with the Jewish people and wanted to create a new image of a resilient and brave new Jew who was deeply connected to the soil. Why do you think some early Zionists wanted to shed the old image of the Jew? Does learning and studying resonate more with you or does getting your hands dirty?

Start-Up Nation

- Of the several factors that likely contributed to Israel's becoming the "Start-up Nation," which one do you think is most influential? Explain.
- What does it mean to you that Israel is a world leader in technology and innovation?
- In the 21st century, technological innovation seems to be the holy grail of achievement. Why do you think this is? In what other ways can a country, or an individual, shine today?