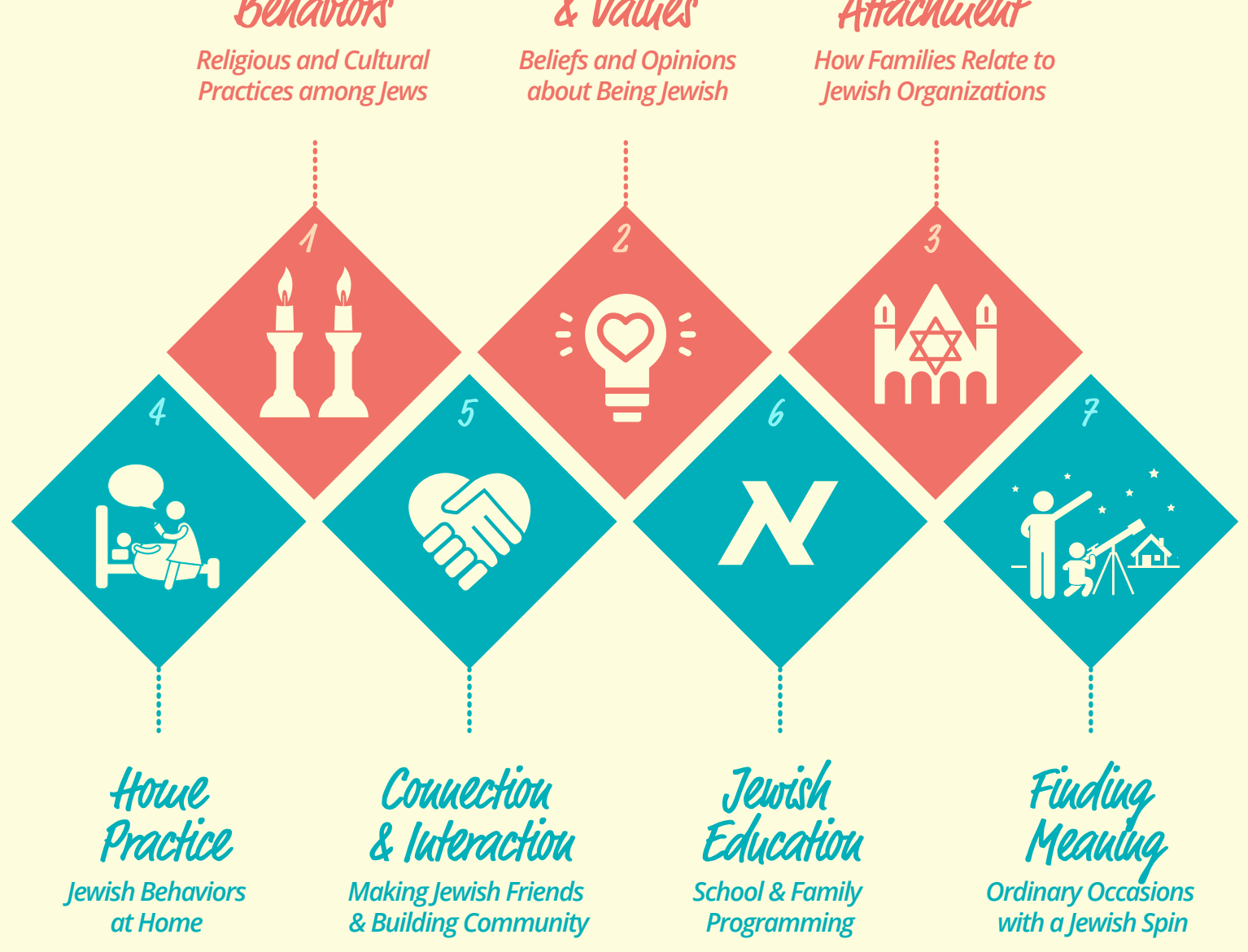


WHAT DOES

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT MEAN FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN?

JEWISH ENGAGEMENT FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN IS MULTIDIMENSIONAL

THE 7 FACTORS OF JEWISH ENGAGEMENT



UNDERSTANDING THE FACTORS

While the first 3 factors of Jewish engagement have been commonly measured among Jewish teens and adults for decades, the remaining 4 factors have received less attention in research despite being particularly salient to contemporary Jewish families with young children. In particular, home practice is an under-studied but potentially rich area of Jewish engagement for families.

1 Behaviors
Religious Practices: Shabbat and holiday celebrations, synagogue attendance, keeping kosher, having a bar/bat mitzvah, wearing Jewish apparel (e.g., kippah)
Cultural Practices: (traditionally ignored in surveys): attending Jewish cultural events, consuming Jewish media (e.g., news, music, movies), eating Jewish foods, displaying Jewish identity through jewelry or clothes with Jewish symbols

2 Attitudes & Values
 These attitudes and beliefs encompass identifying as Jewish, feeling pride in being Jewish, feeling an emotional attachment to the Jewish people and/or the State of Israel, and/or believing that Jewish law and values provide moral guidance to one's life.

3 Institutional Attachment
 Traditional conceptualization of this factor has been measured through *belonging to Jewish organizations*, and this is still a metric valued by Jewish professionals. However, today's families are more likely to attend programs offered by Jewish organizations but not seek long-term membership in these organizations.

4 Home Practice
 This dimension can involve reading stories, singing songs, or engaging in other media/cultural activities inside the home. Some Jewish professionals feel that the home is an optimal place for Shabbat and holiday observance, and others feel that home observance is a more practical option for families with children.

5 Connection & Interaction
 Families with young children enjoy socializing with Jewish friends, either in their own homes, in others' homes, or at other venues both inside and outside of Jewish institutions. Families often report having more Jewish friends after becoming parents, and parents who send their children to Jewish educational programs can connect with a community of other Jewish parents.

6 Jewish Education
 Jewish educational choices for children is a unique aspect of Jewish engagement for families with young children. The choice to take part in Jewish family programming or education is a form of Jewish engagement.

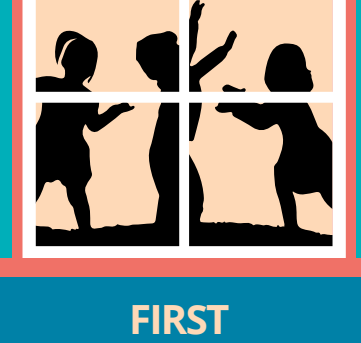
7 Finding Meaning
 This dimension refers to the ways that the ordinary occasions of family life (like bedtime rituals) get related to or imbued with Jewish ideas, words, and values. Learning to understand Judaism's applicability within the real world of families' daily lives can help all types of Jewish families feel connected to Judaism's rich customs and traditions.

"WINDOWS OF OPPORTUNITY" HOW FAMILIES CAN INCREASE JEWISH ENGAGEMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN



WELCOMING THE FIRST CHILD INTO THE FAMILY

The birth of the first child and a child's entry into Jewish Early Childhood Education are important times when families may become more engaged in Jewish life because the experience of having a young child can create a feeling of openness to new experiences for parents.



FIRST CHILD'S ENTRY INTO ECE

EVALUATING ENGAGEMENT A WIDER VIEW

Measuring Success

The success of Jewish Early Childhood Education (ECE) programs is often evaluated by measures of INSTITUTIONAL ATTACHMENT (e.g., numbers of synagogue members, or numbers who attend an event) rather than changes in HOME PRACTICE or the quality of relationships between families (CONNECTION & INTERACTION). The emphasis on institutional attachment and supporting Jewish families' connections inside the institutional building rather than outside suggest educational programs have an opportunity to take a wider view of what Jewish engagement means.

Prioritizing Relationships

Compared to institutional membership, relationships are more likely to be a lasting characteristic of families' Jewish engagement. Some Jewish professionals use a *relationship-based approach* to engagement. This creating and supporting relationships is of equal or greater importance to providing particular content. Staff (and clergy) focus on developing relationships with children, parents, and grandparents to deepen families' engagement in Jewish life. These Jewish professionals are increasingly focusing on listening to families' individual stories in order to discover which opportunities might best engage them in Jewish life.



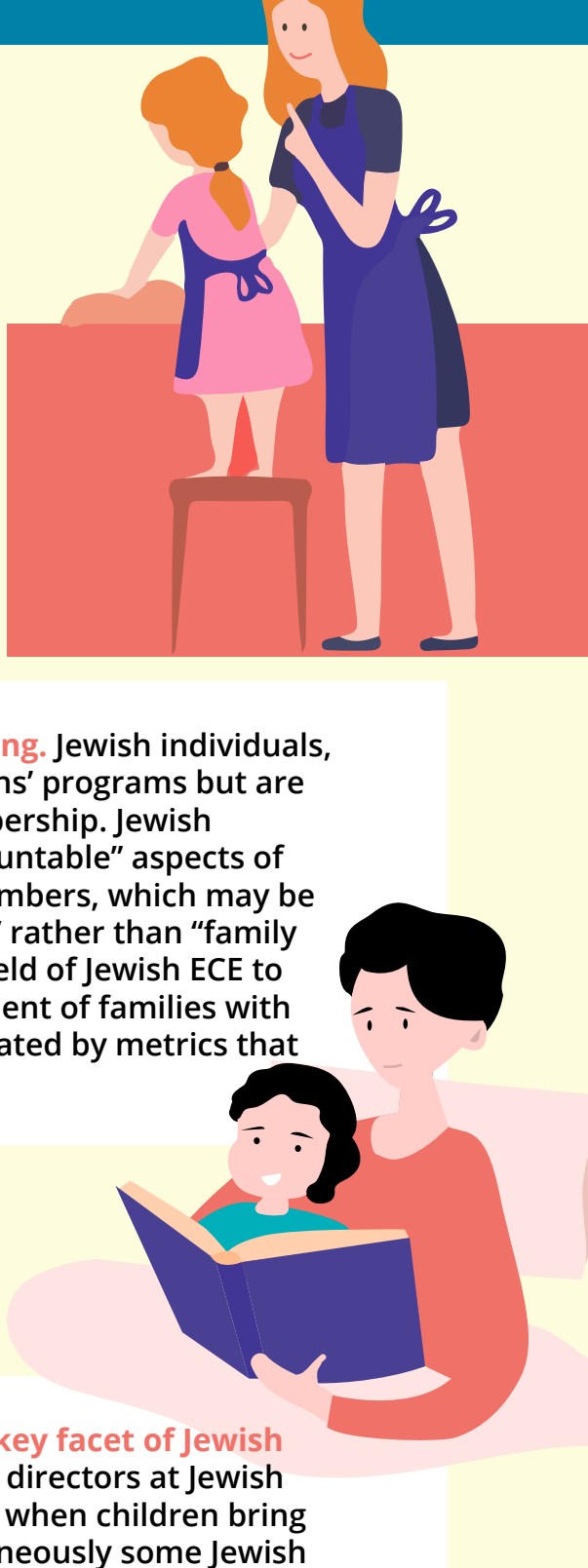
IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

1 THINK DIFFERENTLY ABOUT WHAT COUNTS AS ENGAGEMENT IN JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Engagement through Jewish organizations is changing. Jewish individuals, as well as families, today still take part in organizations' programs but are less likely to make a long-term commitment to membership. Jewish organizations have historically been interested in "countable" aspects of engagement such as membership and enrollment numbers, which may be better described as "family institutional involvement" rather than "family engagement". This points to an opportunity for the field of Jewish ECE to better articulate its mission to foster Jewish engagement of families with young children and ensure that their Jewish engagement is evaluated by metrics that take this larger objective into account.

2 BRING JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION HOME

Encouraging more home-based Jewish practice is a key facet of Jewish engagement for families with young children. Many directors at Jewish ECE programs recognize that home practice develops when children bring home what they learned in their ECE programs. Simultaneously some Jewish ECE directors noted that they don't want to "push" Jewish home practices too much and too fast for fear of alienating families. Thinking more broadly about what constitutes Jewish home practice to include cultural activities, child-centered Jewish materials in the home, and everyday practices like bedtime rituals may point to more opportunities for Jewish ECE to foster Jewish engagement for families with young children.



3 FIND MORE WAYS TO DOCUMENT WHAT FAMILY ENGAGEMENT LOOKS LIKE IN JEWISH EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

When we articulate what our aims are we can do a better job of assessing whether or not we are meeting our goals. Challenges to measuring family engagement include: developing measures that account for the multidimensional nature of engagement, distinguishing between indicators and facilitators of engagement, and refining our measures so they are more precise and unambiguous.



Based on findings from:

Exploring the Associations between Jewish Early Care and Education and Jewish Engagement: Research to Inform Practice

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