



★ Arts & Culture

Resource Guide

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Articles

A Plague on All Your Art Houses.....	www.guiltandpleasure.com/hasids
Plagued.....	www.guiltandpleasure.com/plagued
Two Sworn Enemies and a Microphone.....	www.guiltandpleasure.com/hiphop
Extreme Makeover.....	Unpublished PowerPoint. Contact aschuetzge@hillel.org
Deconstructing Deborah.....	www.guiltandpleasure.com/yoga



Hillel's talkspace:
creating a place on campus for meaningful conversation

Introduction

A new and successful trend has emerged recently at campus Hillels around the country: regularly-meeting discussion groups engaging new students in intellectual dialogue around issues and ideas that are relevant to participants' daily lives.

Examples of such forums include "Conscious Community" initiatives at the University of Washington and UCSD, the "Bina Initiative" at UNC, and the Senior Jewish Educator pilot at UCLA. Many campuses have also begun to use educational materials developed by the Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning, including Aryeh Ben David's Spiritual Check-Ups, as tools in shaping student interaction. Firsthand reports from Hillel professionals implementing these programs have taught us that these forums are effective vehicles for **Jewish engagement, identity development, and provision of meaningful Jewish experiences.**

In a strategic move to connect more students to meaningful Jewish experiences, Hillel is laying the groundwork to propagate these group discussion opportunities by distributing accessible educational resources around which these types of groups can be constructed.

To this end, Hillel now introduces **talkspace**.

What is a "talkspace?"

The term **talkspace** refers to a regularly meeting learning community formed around a particular subject: current examples include Jewish Culture, Spirituality, Tzedek, and Israel. **It combines the sense of community offered by a book club with the intellectual engagement of an academic seminar.** Ultimately, a **talkspace** is a programmatic model for engaging students in meaningful Jewish conversations around issues which matter to them.

Fostering **talkspace** groups around a variety of subjects will provide new alternative outlets for Jewish expression. As such, **talkspace** is a particularly apt tool for reaching students who have been engaged in Jewish life, but for whom the mainstream Jewish community on

campus is not the next appropriate follow-through opportunity. In its potential to reach out widely, **talkspace** is poised to become a critical component of Jewish life on campus.

The **talkspace** model also represents **Hillel's capacity to add value to the greater university community**: rarely do students have the opportunity to participate in such substantive and heartfelt conversations about issues and ideas that are relevant to their daily lives. Not only will **talkspace** become an essential tool for Jewish engagement, but it positions Hillel as a key player on the stage of college student identity development.

Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning is in the process of making **talkspace** guides available for the following interest areas:

- **talkspace: Israel**
- **talkspace: Jewish art and culture**
- **talkspace: Spirituality**
- **talkspace: Tzedek**

These resource guides contain facilitator instructions and discussion materials for groups meeting regularly over the course of several months. Additional resources are available to support individuals in planning, recruiting, conducting, and maintaining **talkspace** communities.



How to Host a talkspace: **Everything you need to kick off your own talkspace on campus!**

Hillel's Joseph Meyerhoff Center for Jewish Learning, in partnership with *Guilt & Pleasure*, is developing materials to support campus-based, regularly-meeting discussion groups. The goal is to engage new students in intellectual dialogue around issues and ideas that are relevant to participants' daily lives. Read this guide to prepare yourself to host a talkspace; then use Hillel's article-specific Facilitator Guides to help you facilitate conversations based on select texts from *Guilt & Pleasure* (www.guiltandpleasure.com).

This guide provides helpful suggestions for how to organize a talkspace, but ultimately no one knows your campus better than you. Always use your judgment and make changes as you see fit.

Why host a talkspace?

A talkspace is the perfect space for engaging a smaller group of students in guided, meaningful Jewish conversation based on text. We know that many Jewish students connect Jewishly through cultural opportunities, rather than through more traditional offerings. This is a fun, sophisticated, and low-cost way to engage Jewish students who love literature and ideas, bringing them together to discuss culturally relevant and intellectually interesting texts.

Preparing for a talkspace:

Who do I invite?

Quite simply, the people who attend will make the talkspace. It may not be the right opportunity for every student, so give some serious thought to which students on your campus would enjoy participating in a conversation about culture and literature. There is no science to guest-listing, but it is important to have as many different kinds of people in the room as possible. Like minds tend to agree, while a diverse group will undoubtedly have a more dynamic and vibrant conversation.

How many people do I invite?

A talkspace can be as small as five people sitting around having a discussion. Some talkspace facilitators agree the "golden number" is somewhere between fourteen and twenty, which is big enough to include a range of voices, but small enough so that everyone gets a chance to talk. With more than twenty people, guests need to start raising their hands to speak and the

spontaneity is lost. The best thing to do is to start small – say a dozen people – and experiment over time to determine the ideal size for your particular group.

How should I invite people?

Unlike other programs that you might publicize broadly, it seems to work best to send personal invitations to talkspace guests to allow for a more deliberately composed group and to add to the personal feel. After creating a guest list, make personal invites by contacting participants directly. Once a core group evolves, participants can begin suggesting guests, and the crowd may grow organically.

How often should we meet?

Successful talkspace groups depend on regularity. Students have busy lives and they forget things all too easily, so keep it straightforward: always have your talkspace on a day that follows a recurrent pattern (for example, the first Friday of every month), and at the same time of day.

A week before you meet, email all guests with a link to the *Guilt & Pleasure* (www.guiltandpleasure.com) article which you would like everyone to read in preparation for the discussion.

Some talkspace groups meet weekly, but a bi-monthly or monthly commitment is more comfortable for most students. Once a month still leaves a short enough period between talkspace discussions to maintain continuity and a sense of community. A talkspace that convenes only every six or eight weeks can have a hard time gaining momentum: if too much time elapses between events, it will be like starting from scratch every time.

How do I select a location?

The venue is an important consideration; it will define the vibe of your talkspace more than you might think. A great space will be private and have a relaxed, comfortable ambiance. You'll want to be sure that you meet in a place where the discussion will not be disrupted by others. You may choose an off-campus location like a local coffee shop or lounge, or an out-of-the-way on-campus spot like the faculty club or campus museum. Student apartments or suites may also be good venues. To achieve a homey feel at your talkspace, you could try having participants with adequate space host on a rotating basis.

Unless you have an exceptional Hillel building which you have a compelling reason to highlight, students will probably respond best to talkspace invitations if you meet *outside* of your Hillel building.

What food do I serve at a talkspace?

This is not the place to serve the stale Stella D'ora cookies and half-eaten bag of chips sitting in the cabinet at Hillel! Go all out and give your talkspace a classy and sophisticated feel. Be creative. Serve a variety of nice teas or juices and good coffee. For food, try breads, fruits, cheeses, or nice cookies and other desserts.

Can I host a Shabbat talkspace?

Definitely. A talkspace is a great alternative to the services and large-group dinner of a typical Hillel Shabbat. Students run around all week from one thing to the next and

sometimes we all need an opportunity to take a break, pause, and reflect. Shabbat is a time for us to relax, enjoy the world, and renew our sense of self. It is an opportunity to connect with ourselves and others – and what better way to do that than through a relaxed dinner and stimulating, reflective conversation?

Try hosting a Friday-night talkspace, provide Jewish staples like challah and rugelach, and invite students to bring the rest of the food for a vegetarian pot-luck dinner. Think about a venue that will set an easy-going tone, whether an apartment or another comfortable space.

Facilitating a talkspace:

Hosting and facilitating – can I do both myself?

Hosting and facilitating are two separate and significant tasks, and while one person can do both, it may be more wise to have two people split the tasks. As host, your job includes taking care of refreshments, maintaining the right ambience, and making guests comfortable. As facilitator, your main job is to keep the conversation flowing and on track, steering the conversation by asking questions and highlighting connections among participants' insights.

This can be harder than it seems: you have to make sure no one is hijacking the discussion and that tangents are not eclipsing your central topic (although sometimes tangents can become more interesting than the topic originally proposed). In short, facilitation requires a lot of concentration, which can be hard when you are also busy filling glasses or pointing people to the bathroom.

Try to decide which job suits you better. If you are a born host, you may choose to bring in a guest facilitator like a popular Jewish professor, a well-liked grad student, or a local author. If you want to facilitate, assign hosting duties to someone you trust – someone you think will be able to create the appropriate atmosphere. If you want to do both, be aware that it will require some extra juggling.

How do I successfully facilitate the discussion?

The texts discussed in your talkspace are likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions. Keep in mind that different people come to the table with different knowledge—or lack of knowledge—and it is important to create a space where terms and references are defined and questions are encouraged. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and help draw everyone into the discussion. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

Hillel offers Facilitator Guides for select articles and stories from *Guilt & Pleasure*. Use the Facilitator Guide for each text to help you prepare your own talkspace outline. Think in advance about which questions you want to ask, what themes you want to highlight, and what course you want the discussion to take. You should pay particular attention to your plan for opening and closing the talkspace to provide satisfying bookends for the discussion.

How long should a talkspace be?

How long the conversation lasts is really up to the host and facilitator, but 45-75 minutes is usually long enough to thoroughly discuss the article at hand but short enough that participants will stay engaged throughout. A venue where people can hang around after the official conversation has ended can be great. Sometimes the most interesting ideas crop up within smaller groups after the discussion has officially closed.

How do I keep the energy going after a talkspace?

Staying in contact with talkspace participants between events helps to carry the group's momentum forward. The Facilitator Guide for each article comes with a list of additional resources (articles, websites, books, etc.) to share with students based on the topic discussed at the talkspace. Send this information to the group by email after the talkspace, along with any other relevant additions you might come across on your own. You can use email or facebook.com to keep the talkspace network virtually connected. You can also encourage participants to attend a related local event together, like a film screening or speaker. And of course, send reminders to the group as the date of the next talkspace approaches!

What comes next?

Once you get to know your talkspace participants and they become comfortable as a group, empower students to take ownership of the talkspace. Eventually, students can become responsible for inviting new participants, selecting venues, selecting texts for the group to discuss, and even facilitating the discussion amongst themselves. A talkspace that is totally student-driven and student-operated won't just make things easier for you – it can also be an even more meaningful Jewish experience for the participants.



Facilitator's Guide

“A Plague on All Your Art Houses” by Nathaniel Deutsch

<http://www.guiltandpleasure.com/hasids>

In this article the myth of the wandering, homeless Jew is turned on its head. The article reveals how a sect of Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn is attempting to preserve a sacred *shtetl* they have created in the face of a changing world. The author addresses this complex story from many perspectives (politics, sociology, economics, linguistics, religion) and touches on issues ranging from gentrification, to sacred space, cultural preservation, and rabbi veneration. This is an opportunity for students to learn about the revolutionary origins of Hasidic Judaism and the diversity of a movement which is often thought of as one-dimensional and monolithic.

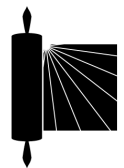
The article is likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions from **talkspace** participants and it is a great idea to invite people to your **talkspace** who you know will have interesting things to say about this article. Keep in mind that different people come to the table with different knowledge and lack of knowledge (i.e. New York culture, Hasidism, Jewish history, gentrification, artsy/hipsterdom) and that it is important to create a space where terms and references are defined and questions are encouraged. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and help draw everyone into the discussion. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

Here are some sample discussion prompt questions to ask at your talkspace:

1. What is this article about? What parts of the article most speak to you?
2. How are the Hasidic Jews depicted in the article? The artists, hipsters, and yuppies? Does this article challenge or support your preconceived notions about these groups?
3. Did your opinions of the Satmar Hasidim and of Williamsburg change or evolve throughout the course of reading the article? How?
4. What did you find surprising about the facts introduced in this article? What resonated with you? What made you feel uncomfortable?
5. Is this article biased or balanced? What else do you wish you knew while reading this article?
6. What is your impression of sacred space as it is described in the article? Do you have sacred space(s) of your own?
7. Is there a person or institution which you place on a pedestal the way the *rebbe*-leader is revered by the Hasidic community?
8. Is this a Jewish story? How does it differ from any other story about the clashes that exist in a gentrifying neighborhood?
9. What does it mean to create a *shtetl* (Jewish village) in America? Is it even possible?

Additional opportunities to share with talkspace participants:

1. "Hats on, Gloves off." An article which appeared recently in *New York Magazine* which tells another side to the story of Williamsburg Hasidim.
<http://nymag.com/news/cityside/16864/>
2. "The Scene: Generation W." An article which appeared in *New York Magazine* which tells the story of how yuppies have taken over this once-bohemian neighborhood.
http://nymag.com/nymetro/arts/music/features/music2002/n_7734/
3. *A Life Apart* a PBS documentary about Hasidic life in America
<http://www.pbs.org/alifeapart/index.html>



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF
CENTER FOR JEWISH LEARNING

Facilitator's Guide
“Plagued” by Shalom Auslander
<http://www.guiltandpleasure.com/plagued>

In this short story, Shalom Auslander retells the well known story of the Israelites' exodus from Egypt from an arresting and irreverent new perspective, similar to the way that *Wicked* challenges *The Wizard of Oz*. Members of the talkspace will likely be familiar with the story of the Exodus, if not from Passover seders and text study, than at least from popular films like *Ten Commandments* and *The Prince of Egypt*. This short story raises questions about identity, peoplehood, and the making and breaking of cultural history by offering a fresh take on an old tale.

This story is likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions from **talkspace** participants. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and help draw everyone into the discussion. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

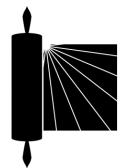
Here are some sample discussion prompt questions to ask at your talkspace:

1. What do you think of this type of storytelling? Have you seen other examples of this format of retelling a classic story from an alternative perspective? How does this story differ from other “retellings” you have read?
2. What did you find surprising about this story? How has reading this short story challenged your understanding of the story of the Israelites exodus from Egypt?
3. What specific themes did Auslander emphasize throughout the novel? What do you think he is trying to get across to the reader?
4. In the Haggadah read at Passover seders, Jews recall their obligation to remember the exodus in every generation, as if they themselves went out of slavery from Egypt. How does reading this story defy and/or fulfill this obligation?
5. When thinking about the story of the Exodus, did you ever consider that some Israelites may have been happily integrated into Egyptian society and unwilling to leave?
6. How does Seth, the main character, understand his own identity compared to how others see him? Which matters more, self-perception or external-perceptions? Do you feel empathy for Seth?
7. Does this story successfully satirize American culture and/or American Jewish culture? Is that the goal of the story?
8. What do you think of the different ways Moses is depicted in the story (human rights activist, terrorist, politician, prince, prophet, magician, madman, etc.)?
9. Does this short story make the story of the exodus from Egypt feel more real or more mythic/fictional?
10. What is God's role in this story? How is God depicted (thug, murderer, etc.)?
11. Are the Israelites naturally hated, or hated only because of the plagues?

12. What does it mean to identify/be identified as an Israelite in the story (race, nationality, people, religion, culture, or something else)? How is this different/similar from our understanding of what it means to identify/be identified as Jewish?

Additional opportunities to share with talkspace participants:

1. Personal website of the author with additional stories, columns and reviews: <http://www.shalomauslander.com/>
2. Nextbook is an organization devoted to promoting Jewish literature and culture. The author writes a column for their website regularly and he sometimes speaks at their events around the country: www.nextbook.org
3. If you enjoyed this contemporary retelling of the biblical narrative, you may also enjoy Jonathan Goldstein's take on the story of Noah and the Flood. An audio version of this story can be found on an episode of Public Radio's "This American Life." The 14 minute story can be found 44:18 into episode #321 entitled "Sink or Swim" - http://www.thisamericanlife.org/Radio_Episode.aspx?episode=321



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Facilitator's Guide

“Two Sworn Enemies and a Microphone” by Dorian Lynskey

<http://www.guiltandpleasure.com/hiphop>

Feuding hip-hop artists are nothing new, but are the stakes higher when the lyrics revolve around Arab-Israeli conflict? This article takes a look at the growing Israeli hip-hop scene and fuels the question of whether Israel is a “light unto the nations” or “a state like any other state.” Arab citizens comprise 20% of Israeli society. Renowned author David Grossman refers to Israeli Arabs as “the quietest minority.” The hip-hop scene may change that silence, giving voice to those who previously lacked a platform. Meanwhile, Jewish rappers with a right-wing stance have developed a huge following among young Israelis in military service – a service Arab citizens cannot perform.

The article is likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions from **talkspace** participants and it is a great idea to invite people to your **talkspace** who you know will have interesting things to say about this article. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and help draw everyone into the discussion. Keep in mind that different people come to the table with different knowledge and lack of knowledge (i.e. Israel, the music industry, politics) and that it is important to create a space where terms and references are defined and questions are encouraged. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

Here are some sample discussion prompt questions to ask at your talkspace:

1. What is this article about?
2. Did your opinion of Kobi Shimoni and Tamer Nafar evolve throughout the course of reading the article? How?
3. What facts and opinions did you find surprising in this article? What resonated with you? What made you feel uncomfortable?
4. Were you shocked by any of the song lyrics cited in the article? How does the content of Israeli hip-hop compare to the American music which inspired it? Does the music “keep it real”? Does it seem powerful, authentic, sensationalist, reasonable, unreasonable, or something else?
5. Is hip-hop more “violently relevant” in Israeli society than in America? What do you think of a culture where musicians and artists have a stake and an influential role in politics?
6. “Hip-hop is the megaphone through which young Israelis are broadcasting their discontent.” What does it mean for music to play this role in society?
7. What do you think of filmmaker Anat Halachmi’s claim that Subliminal and DAM’s dueling dynamic is essentially the same as the dynamic of Israeli and Palestinian leadership?
8. Does the author give proper consideration to all sides of the issues raised in the article? Does the author seem to have a bias? What was missing from this article?

Additional opportunities to share with talkspace participants:

1. Bring *Channels of Rage* to campus. Website on the award-winning documentary about the Shimoni/Nafar feud.
<http://www.culturewars.org.uk/2004-01/channels.htm>
2. Find Tamer Nafar/DAM's music and tour calendar on MySpace.
<http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewprofile&friendid=25392149>
3. Tel Aviv City Team (TACT), Shimoni's record label which represents Subminal and other popular Israeli artists. <http://www.tact-records.com/en/>
4. Several Subliminal and DAM music videos and recordings can be found by searching YouTube.



Facilitator's Guide

“Extreme Makeover” Photo Essay by Jonathan Targovnik

www.guiltandpleasure.com

In this photo essay, photographer Jonathan Targovnik portrays parallel images of Israelis as civilians and as reserve service soldiers. In Israel, serving in the army is compulsory for both male and female citizens when they reach age 18. Men must serve three years and women must serve two years. After serving in active duty, male citizens must also serve as reserve soldiers for one month annually, as requested, until age 43. In theory this is also true for female citizens, although in practice most women do not serve reserve duty for more than a few years after being released. Men over 43 and all women may volunteer in reserve duty until age 60.

The photographs from “Extreme Makeover” are likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions from participants and it is a great idea to invite people to your **talkspace** who you know will have interesting things to say about this photo essay. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and to help draw everyone in to the discussion. Keep in mind that different people come to the table with different levels of knowledge (i.e. Israel, politics, photography) and that it is important to create a space where terms and references are defined and questions are encouraged. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

Here are some discussion prompt questions to ask at your talkspace:

1. What do you think about these photographs? What do you notice about them?
2. How are Israelis depicted in the photographs?
3. What message do you think the photographer was trying to relay by taking these pictures? Is there a different message for the subjects than there is for the viewer?
4. What do you find interesting about the composition of each photo? Do you think you would feel differently if the photographs were not parallel?
5. How do these images make you feel? Do they confirm or contest your previous notions of the Israeli Defense Force?
6. After seeing these photographs, do you have criticisms of the Israeli Defense Force?
7. Which of these photographs is your favorite? Why?
8. Which photograph surprises you? How does it surprise you?
9. Which photograph tells the most interesting story? What is that story?
10. Are there other questions that this photo essay elicits?
11. What do you think it would be like to leave your everyday life for one month a year?

Additional opportunities to share with talkspace participants:

1. The photographer, Jonathan Torgovnik's, website, where you will find more photographs of Israel and an eclectic selection of his other work.
<http://www.torgovnik.com>
2. "Israeli Reservists Ready for Action." A BBC news article reporting about being called to serve reserve duty during the Second Lebanon War in August 2006.
http://flametree.blog-city.com/israeli_reservists_ready_for_action.htm



HILLEL'S JOSEPH MEYERHOFF
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Facilitator's Guide
“Deconstructing Deborah” by Emily Gould
www.guiltandpleasure.com/yoga

In this article, Emily Gould tells the story of her spiritual journey through yoga. While reflecting on her relationship with her yoga teacher, Deborah, the author offers humor and insight on what it means to question individual spirituality. The author reflects on this relationship as of way of telling tell her own story of personal and spiritual transformation. After reading this story, **talkspace** participants can be asked to reflect on their own spiritual journey.

This story is likely to elicit many diverse and interesting reactions from **talkspace** participants. Your job as the facilitator is not to push the conversation in any specific direction, but to help the conversation flow naturally and to help draw everyone into the discussion. Sometimes great conversation happens on its own, and sometimes it is necessary to pose questions to the group which can spark discussion or advance the conversation after a lull.

Here are some discussion prompt questions to ask at your talkspace:

1. What do you think this story is about?
2. What part of it, if any, resonates with you?
3. In the story, the author resists checking in with herself. Do you check in with yourself? Do you think it is a conscious process? What do you do to ensure that you are taking good care of yourself?
4. Do you feel a part of a “spiritual community”? What does it mean it to be a member in this community? Do you agree with the author that it is a “shared decision to be there” that helps to define a community?
5. In the story, the author asks Deborah if she identifies with her parent’s religion. Do you? As a critically thinking adult, do you challenge the ways that you were raised in terms of religion?
6. When asked about her belief in God, Deborah responds, “Nope, no God... Just people.” Do you believe in God? What do you believe in?
7. In what situations do you feel closest to the people around you? Is it when you are deep in conversation? Praying? Playing a sport? Acting on stage? Sitting in silence with others?
8. In the story, the author has help finding wisdom and balance in her life. Is there anyone in your life who has helped you become who you are?

Additional opportunities to share with talkspace participants:

1. Listen to an NPR podcast on Jewish meditation.
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1073174&sc=emaf>
2. Read more about the Jewish Yoga movement.
<http://www.yogamosaic.org/yoga-mosaic-books.html> “Jewish Yoga,” by Wendy Schneider



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