

# THE KARATE KID

“Make for yourself a Rabbi...”  
Pirkei Avos 1:16



A text-based session about Mentorship

### Opening

- I. Welcome your Juniors to the Session. Ask them how they have been enjoying the Shabbaton and make small talk to get them to feel comfortable. This is a good chance to play a short Ice Breaker for you to learn their names.
- II. Talk to you Juniors about what they think a mentor is and whether or not they think it is important to have someone who they can be open with.

# Begin session

**Ask the group:** Who's familiar with The Karate Kid? Pick someone that knows about it and have them explain what the basic idea of the movie is.  
(Shouldn't take more than a minute or so)

### Summary

When his mother's career results in a move to China, 12-year-old Dre Parker (Jaden Smith) finds that he is a stranger in a strange land. Though he knows a little karate, his fighting skills are no match for Cheng, the school bully. Dre finds a friend in Mr. Han (Jackie Chan), a maintenance man who is also a martial-arts master. Mr. Han teaches Dre all about Kung Fu in the hope that Dre will be able to face down Cheng.



# A Torah Perspective...

Now that we understand a bit about Dre, Mr. Han and The Karate Kid itself, let's try and **understand it through the lens of Torah.**

- When Dre had just moved to China, He was finding it hard to fit in to the new culture. He was being bullied and he didn't have any friends to support him. He found Mr. Han, and as they built up their relationship, Mr. Han took in Dre as his Protégé and Dre took Mr. Han in as his mentor.

**Ask the group:** Are there any examples in the Torah where we can see a connection between two people, similar to Mr. Han and Dre's relationship? (Mentorship)

Remember to validate them! (This will encourage them to continue participating.)



Pass out the source sheets

# SOURCES

## Source 1: Tanya

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi explains in this book, the Tanya, that there are two distinct souls controlling the body and fighting for its ownership: an "animal soul" and a "G-dly soul".

## Source 4: Gemara Sanhedrin 95a

ונימא ליה איהו אין חבוש מוציא עצמו מבית האסורין

The Gemara asks: And let David himself recite the name of God and save himself. Why did he need Avishai? The Gemara answers: A prisoner does not release himself from a prison but requires someone else to release him.

## Source 2: Bamidbar 13:16

אלה שמות האנשים אשר-שלח משה לתור את-הארץ ויקרא משה להושע בן-נון יהושע

These are the names of the men Moses sent to scout the Land, and Moses called Hoshea the son of Nun, Joshua.

## Source 3: Mishna Negaim 2:5

כל הנגעים אדם רואה, חוץ מנגעי עצמו. רבי מאיר אומר, אף לא נגעי קרוביו. כל הנדרים אדם מתיר, חוץ מנדרי עצמו

A man can examine all defects except for his own defects. Rabbi Meir says: Even not the defects of relatives. A man may revoke all vows except for his own vows.

## Source 5: Pirkei Avot 1:6

יהושע בן פרחיה ונתאי קיבלו מהם. יהושע בן פרחיה אומר עשה לך רב, וקנה לך חבר, והבי דן את כל האדם לכף זכות

Joshua the son of Perachia would say: Find for yourself a mentor, acquire for yourself a friend, and judge everybody favourably.

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 EMBRACING OUR INDIVIDUAL STRUGGLES- THE BUTTERFLY
 

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Once a little boy was playing outdoors and found a fascinating caterpillar. He carefully picked it up and took it home to show his mother. He asked his mother if he could keep it, and she said he could if he would take good care of it. The little boy got a large jar from his mother and put plants to eat, and a stick to climb on, in the jar.

Every day he watched the caterpillar and brought it new plants to eat. One day the caterpillar climbed up the stick and started acting strangely. The boy worriedly called his mother who came and understood that the caterpillar was creating a cocoon. The mother explained to the boy how the caterpillar was going to go through a metamorphosis and become a butterfly.

The little boy was thrilled to hear about the changes his caterpillar would go through. He watched every day, waiting for the butterfly to emerge. One day it happened, a small hole appeared in the cocoon and the butterfly started to struggle to come out. At first the boy was excited, but soon he became concerned. The butterfly was struggling so hard to get out! It looked like it couldn't break free! It looked desperate! It looked like it was making no progress!

The boy was so concerned he decided to help. He ran to get scissors, and then walked back (because he had learned not to run with scissors...). He snipped the cocoon to make the hole bigger and the butterfly quickly emerged!



As the butterfly came out the boy was surprised. It had a swollen body and small, shriveled wings. He continued to watch the butterfly expecting that, at any moment, the wings would dry out, enlarge and expand to support the swollen body. He knew that in time the body would shrink and the butterfly's wings would expand.

But neither happened!

The butterfly spent the rest of its life crawling around with a swollen body and shriveled wings.

It never was able to fly...

As the boy tried to figure out what had gone wrong his mother took him to talk to a scientist from a local college. He learned that the butterfly was **SUPPOSED** to struggle. In fact, the butterfly's struggle to push its way through the tiny opening of the cocoon pushes the fluid out of its body and into its wings. Without the struggle, the butterfly would never, ever fly. The boy's good intentions hurt the butterfly.

As you go through life, keep in mind that struggling is an important part of any growth experience. In fact, it is the struggle that causes you to develop your ability to fly.

- ❖ HAVE YOU EVER ENCOUNTERED STUGGLES IN YOUR LIFE, THAT YOU HAVE HAD TO DEAL WITH ON YOUR OWN, THAT ACTUALLY TURNED OUT TO BE A GOOD THING BECAUSE THEY HELPED YOU GROW?
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## Source 1

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the founder of the Chabad movement, explains in his classic work, the Tanya, that there are two distinct souls animating the body and fighting for its dominion: an “animal soul” and a “G-dly soul.” The animal soul is driven by the self-centered desires of physical life, and the G-dly soul by the selfless quest to serve G-d.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman’s successor, Rabbi Dovber, explained that the animal soul has no interest whatsoever in the triumph of someone else’s animal soul; by contrast, the G-dly soul’s only desire is that the will of G-d be fulfilled, so it desires the success of the G-dly soul in others as well.

When a person grapples alone with his or her problems, there is a one-on-one struggle between these two selves. But when two people get together, the animal soul of each (working by itself, independent of the other) is overwhelmed by a double onslaught of the two G-dly souls working together. While any good friend can help us for the reasons above, a mentor is someone who knows us well and has the wisdom of experience that makes his or her guidance that much more effective.

**Ask your group** if they have ever had a time in their lives where they feel that having someone to guide them through and help them would have benefitted them positively. (Remember to validate their ideas.)

Also, was there ever a time in your life that you struggled by yourself and grew from it?  
(BUTTERFLY STORY)

## Source 2

Before Moses sent 12 spies into Israel (to check out the land,) He gave his student, Hosea and extra letter in his name. He added a ‘Yud’, to make his name Joshua.

**Ask your group:** Why do you think that Moses would give his student an extra letter in his name? Remember to validate their answers.

The reason Moses added a letter to his name is because as Joshua’s mentor, Moshe felt the need to help Joshua to be able to separate from the other 11 spies. As we know, when the spies returned from Israel, they sinned by lying and telling everyone that Israel was not a good place. 2 of the spies refused to participate in the sinning. One of them was Joshua. By Moshe giving Joshua an extra letter in his name, Joshua gained awareness that he was different from all the other spies. When they decided to sin, Joshua remembered his mentor and saved himself from sinning (and the punishment that was given to all the other spies). Joshua’s mentor saved him.

But what about the other student?

**Source 3**

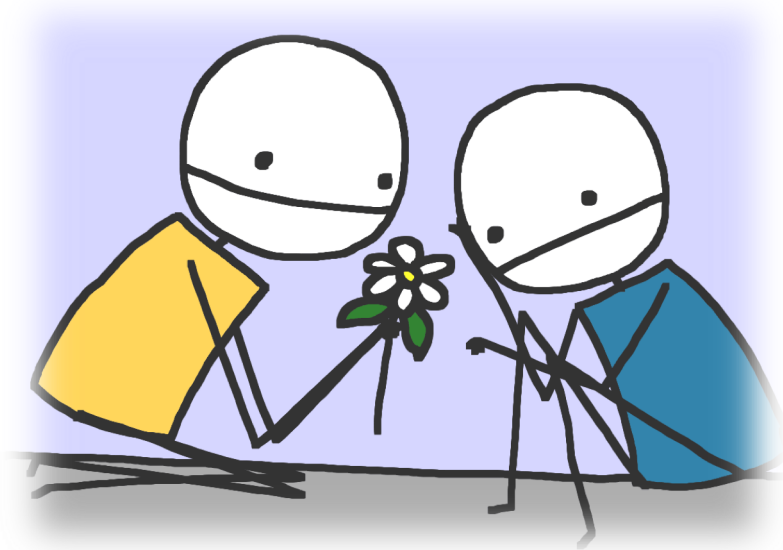
The sages in the Mishnah tell us that “one cannot examine his own defects.” While the sages were referring to someone who wishes to diagnose himself with leprosy, this statement is also understood allegorically and is explained that it is very difficult for us to be objective about our weaknesses (or, for that matter, about our strengths) and we often underestimate or overestimate what we can or cannot do. A mentor who knows us well can help us see ourselves objectively and guide us to use our strengths and work on our weaknesses so that we grow in our Judaism.

**Ask your group** why they think it is important to have someone who can help them overcome their weaknesses and develop their strengths.  
(Always remember to validate their answers!)

**Source 4**

The Talmud tells us that “a prisoner cannot free himself from his prison.” So, too, a mentor provides us with the outside help that we need to lift ourselves up when we are down and rejoice with us when we are happy.

**Ask the Juniors** if they ever had a time when they were feeling sad and someone came and cheered them up. How did they feel? Did it help them cope with the sadness? Did you ever need time to be by yourself? (Remember to let them speak and validate their answers.)



Optional: Feel Free to put in a story at this point about someone who helped a friend when they were down. Remember to make sure that you have time.

**Source 5**

Joshua the son of Perachia, a Rabbi in Pirkei Avos, would say that one of the most important things in life is to find for yourself a mentor, make a friend, and judge everybody favorably.

## Take away message...

Just like in The Karate Kid, when Dre was feeling down and alone, he found for himself a mentor and ended up on top, victorious. We can learn from the Torah and the movie that it is important for everyone to have a mentor. Someone who they can rely on to cheer them up when they are down, someone to talk to when you are at a low, and someone to rejoice with when you are happy and victorious.

## The importance of making lasting relationships

**The relationship between an NCSY'er and his/her advisor can be life changing**

