

---

# MYSTERIES

---

## SKILLS

---

- ❖ Thinking, Decision-Making, Problem-Solving
- ❖ Working with Others

## WHAT IS IT?

---

This activity asks teens to use problem-solving and decision-making skills to solve a mystery, make a decision or explore potential explanations for an event. This activity will include a debriefing session afterwards. The method encourages teens to produce reasoned arguments, based on knowledge and understanding of an issue, as well as sound evidence.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR ROOM LAYOUT

---

This activity might be undertaken in a large group with teens sitting in a circle or semi-circle, or in small groups around a desk.

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

---

1. Teens are given a set of 10 to 20 statements about a particular issue. If this is a whole-group activity, each Teen might be given one statement which they read out to the group. Alternatively, Teens in small groups might be allocated a set of statements.
2. If the statements will lead to a decision being made by the group, Teens could be encouraged to consider each statement in turn in order to establish its meaning and to discuss all possible factors.
3. After time for group discussion, Teens should feedback on their decisions and justify them effectively and articulately, using reasoned argument and evidence, if appropriate.
4. In a possible debrief afterwards, Teens could concentrate on the processes that led to decisions being made or problems being solved. How did groups arrive at a decision? Where there a variety of opinions? How was consensus reached?  
Were judgments justified effectively? Were judgments articulated effectively?  
Were there allocated roles within the group and how effectively were these carried out?

## NCSY APPLICATION

---

You can create sources and ideas for any topic that you are discussing and have the teens work the answer out through discussion and team work.

See below 4 topics I have already prepared-

1. Abortion
2. Plastic Surgery
3. Organ Donation
4. Cost of life

---

## ABORTION

---

**A girl of 18 finds herself pregnant with an unwanted child- according to the Torah, can she have an abortion?  
What if she was raped?**

Torah Obligation of PERU UREVU- to be fruitful and multiply (that is to have children)

Torah Obligation to look after one's self and guard your life

*Exodus 21:22-23*: When two men fight and accidentally harm a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry. If there is no fatal injury to the woman, the guilty party must pay compensation.

*Exodus 21:12*: He that kills a *man* shall surely be put to death.

*Havot Yair* :Abortion is not murder but prohibited by the Torah as *Hashchatat Zera*, wasting seed/potential life

*Mishna Arachin 1:4*: "If a woman is about to be executed, one does not wait until she has given birth."

Lo taamod al dam re'echa (Don't stand on your brother's blood)

*Ohalot Mishna 7:6* - The woman having difficulty in labour - cut up the foetus inside of her and remove it limb by limb, because her life take precedence over its life. Once most of it emerges [generally understood as when most of the head emerges], do not harm it, because we do not set aside one life for another.

Extreme medical need of the mother which is not life threatening: R' Y. Emden (permits in cases of extreme pain); R' Uziel (permits if the pregnancy will result in the mother's deafness)

Psychiatric Grounds - Where the mother may become *mentally deranged*, many authorities consider this a risk to the life of the mother and permit an abortion on this basis (Note - this is an extreme case and must be judged by a competent authority based on the specific facts of a specific case).

In any event, R' Waldenberg cautions by mentioning the Zohar, which he says should send chills down the back of one who contemplate permitting an abortion. Furthermore, he definitely would not permit in cases of convenience or for pregnancies resulting from immodest sexual activities.

---

## PLASTIC SURGERY

---

**A young man of 25 finds himself repulsive when he looks in the mirror he wants to have plastic surgery is this permitted according to the Torah?**

*Talmud: Bava kama 91:* A person is not allowed to injure/ wound themselves

*Rambam Hilchot Chovel:* You're not allowed to draw blood or wound in anger

A person may not put himself in danger or endanger his own life

A son should not ordinarily remove a splinter, remove blood or amputate a limb from his father. (*Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 241:3*) If no other physician is available the son may do so to relieve his father's pain (*Rama*)

Embarrassment and shame is considered emotional pain.

A man may not beautify himself in the ways of a woman or dress in her clothing (*Deuteronomy 22:5*)

One may place his trust in G-d regarding normally acceptable risks (*Shabbat 129 b*)

It is forbidden to undergo plastic surgery purely for the sake of beautification because this is interference and “improvement” of G-d’s work (*Tzits Eliezer*)

A man whose beard and eyebrows were half black and half white caused him severe embarrassment he is permitted to dye the white hairs black.

Taking risks for the sake of relieving pain is permissible since all healing is associated with some risks.

Depending on the operation, the surgeon might break the nose bone and reposition it and/or reshape the cartilage.

Not being able to find a marriage partner constitutes psychological pain.

---

## THE VALUE OF LIFE

---

**In the holocaust- a concentration camp inmate asked the following to a Rabbi: The nazis have imprisoned 100 children whom they will kill tomorrow morning, my son is among them. Am I allowed to bribe the guards to free my son? If I do the Nazis will replace my son with someone else’s.**

Do not stand by the blood of your friend

*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin, 74a:* "The governor of my town has ordered me to kill so-and-so, 'if not,' he says, 'then I will kill you'." [Raba] answered him, "Let him slay you rather than you should commit murder. Who knows that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder."

*Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin, 37a:* Anyone who destroys a life is as if he destroys an entire world; and anyone who saves a life is as if he saved an entire world.

*Maimonides, Mishna Torah, The Foundations of the Torah, 5:1-2:* If one is forced to either transgress one of the commandments of the Torah or else be killed, he should transgress and not be killed, as it says in the Torah,..."**and live with them [the commandments]**", one should live with them, not die with them. This is in reference to all the commandments except: idol worship, sexual immorality and murder. In regards to these three transgressions,... one should be killed and not transgress.

*Talmud Bavli, Nida 16b:* Rebbe Chanina bar Pappa explained: the angel appointed to oversee the conceiving of a child takes a drop [of semen] and brings it before the Holy One, Blessed be He, and he says, "Master of the World! What will be with this drop? Will he be strong or weak? Wise or foolish? Rich or poor?" The angel does not ask if it will be righteous or evil, as Reb Chanina explained: "Everything is in the hands of Heaven except the fear of Heaven."

Every individual is born with a unique personality and set of circumstances, as well as a certain amount of potential for growth. Where we begin is beyond our control. However, we are responsible for where we end up and the choices we make along the way.

We can judge a thief's actions, but not his *worth*. The two judgments are separate, the former belonging to man and the latter belonging only to God

*Talmud Bavli Bava Metzia 62a:* It was taught, two people were walking along the way [in the desert] and one had in his possession a flask of water. If the two would share the water they would both die. If one would drink it, he would reach the town; Ben Petura explained, better that they both should die, and one should not see the death of his friend. [This was accepted] until R. Akiva came and taught [that the verse], "Your brother shall live with you," (Leviticus 25) [means] your life takes precedence over your friend's life.

*Talmud Bavli (Sanhedrin 74b) Tosafot:* A person is told, "Don't move (be passive) and I will use your body to crush this infant to death, and if you do move (be active) I'll kill you instead." To knowingly allow your body to be used to kill someone is legally considered murder (albeit passive).

At times one is exempt from saving someone's life

## ORGAN DONATION

---

**A woman wants to sign a card that entitles hospitals to use her organs for saving lives after her death. According to Jewish Law, may she do so?**

*Deuteronomy. 21:23:* Referring to the body of an executed criminal] his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but you shall surely bury him the same day.

*Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 46a-47a:* Whoever delays the burial of the dead transgresses a negative commandment; but, if he delays to honour the dead, there is no transgression.

*Talmud Bavli Chullin 11b:* Murdering a terminally ill person, though murder, is not punishable by the death penalty.] Even though it might save the life of a convicted killer, the dead body of the victim is not examined [is not disgraced] to determine whether the victim was a *treifa* [terminally ill]. Rather, we rely on the principle of *rov* [we follow the majority. We assume the victim was a healthy individual, because most people are healthy and not terminally ill].

*Noda bi-Yehudah:* A corpse may be violated despite the Biblical prohibition for *Pikuach Nefesh*, if the life-saving need is for a patient before us.

*R' Isser Yehuda Unterman:* Because of modern technology, *before us* can mean almost anywhere today; however the need must still be specific, and not based on a general notion that "we will find" a beneficiary.

*Talmud Bavli Avoda Zarah 29b:* Benefiting from a dead body is prohibited –

*Beis Yosef:* In the Jerusalem Talmud it states that a person is even obligated to place themselves at a risk to their own life [to save their friend], and it seems that the reason is that his friend faces certain death, whereas it is only a risk to him.

*Pikuach Nefesh- saving a life-* can include :Kidney and Heart (keeping in mind the brain death issue), Dwarfism, most authorities agree that saving a person from total blindness is within the parameters of *pikuach nefesh*.

The dead have no obligations anymore this is why men do not wear their Tzitzit out when they go to the cemetery- so as not to taunt the dead that they cannot do any Torah obligations.

The Torah prescribes the need to bury the dead intact.

---

## BOTTOM LINE

---

### **Abortion:**

Bottom line: The Torah permits abortion if the mother's life is in danger.

There are some cases that it is permitted if her psychological well being is in danger.

### **Plastic Surgery:**

Bottom line: Generally we should not take unnecessary risks- and men are not allowed to beautify themselves in the way of women. But the psychological well being of the person is taken into account.

### **Value of Life:**

Bottom line: The Torah says "Whose blood is redder" therefore – because there was a quota in this case- and another child would be snatched and killed- the father was not allowed to save his own son.

### **Organ Donation:**

Bottom Line: One is not allowed to desecrate the body of a dead person- this includes organ donation. However- if there is an actual need for the organ on the spot- then it can be permitted. The biggest problem – is defining death- brain stem death or cardiac death- big machloket!

---

## DISCLAIMER

---

**All of these topics are very sensitive and each case is individual and a competent halachik authority needs to be consulted in each instance.**