

Peter Eckstein - Hevruta Homework

What happened? (Describe the workshop) How did you (or did you not) use the prompts and language that were provided in the guidelines for the assignment?

I chose two people with whom to do this assignment: My daughter, Ma'ayan, who is a 3rd grade teacher in a secular school, and her fiancé, Scott, a 4th year Rabbinical Student at HUC. The text I chose was the first part of the Resh Lakish - Rabbi Yonatan text.

We began with introducing the ideas of active listening, supporting and challenging questions, and how language shapes the dialogue and process of study.

Then, Ma'ayan and Scott read the text to one another. I asked them for any interpretations that might arise. They focused on the second part of the text – the argument between the two Rabbis. During the discussion I tried to model the use of the prompts and language that were in the guidelines.

Occasionally one of them would challenge or question an interpretation, I would remind them of the guidelines and they would reframe their question or statement.

How did this compare with what you assumed or hoped would happen? Were there aspects of what happened that surprised you? Were there aspects that pleased you? Why?

I went into this process without expectations or assumptions. I found the discussion to be fascinating, and at the same time challenging. It was hard for me to be both be involved in the discussion but at the same time be detached enough to be mindful of the language guidelines. The balance was hard. How does one do both?

What did participants report about their experience and/or learning?

When they reflected on the experience, they both felt that the idea of using language as a tool to support learning was very useful. They did feel that it would have been more helpful if I had modeled the skill more as it is not an easy concept to master and practice.

Read the Journal entry you wrote on your learning of these practices during our last seminar: Anything new you've learned? Any new question or insights you have about your learning of these practices? Any new question or insights you have about teaching these practices to colleagues?

This experience confirmed for me what I already wrote about – that the process of using language redefines how I approach the text, the learner and myself as a teacher/learner. It's a mindfulness thing...it's challenging and I'd like to try doing it again.