

YOUNG MEN'S/YOUNG FAMILIES INITIATIVE

As a membership-driven organization, it is imperative for the FJMC to continually seek to reinvent ourselves, refresh our ranks, and refocus our efforts on recruiting new members in order to maintain our growth and success. To do so, we must particularly focus on the next generation of Jewish men who will follow those in current leadership.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

1. Our goal is to attract the next generation to become part of Men's Club through their participation in activities and programming, and eventually as members.
2. There are many younger men and younger fathers in your communities. They're just not members of your shul, or possibly any shul. So we need to find them, just as Chabad finds unaffiliated Jews.
3. Ensure that your Men's Club is allowed to accept as members those people who are not members of your synagogue, with no preconditions. This will open up opportunities for your club, and eventually for your synagogue, but do not pressure potential new members to join immediately. Focus on good programming, and the membership will follow naturally.
4. Gain support from our synagogue clergy and executive directors for our efforts to reach younger men, particularly those outside the synagogue. Start with your own shul membership, but go further.
5. Partner with local pre-schools, synagogue schools, and Jewish day schools, as well as your Sisterhood or Women's League affiliate, to find parents and publicize Men's Club activities. Work with your local Federation, young parents and young professional groups to identify potential members. Reach out to other synagogues that do not have their own Men's Club.
6. Use social media and text groups to promote your activities. That's how younger guys are communicating, not with print or mail.
7. Design **some** of your programming to appeal to a younger audience. This does not mean discarding long-time members and their interests, but broadening your reach.
8. Your longstanding ideas, programs and techniques won't work; think outside the box for new ideas and new programs. Sunday morning events, such as brunch with speakers, could work for young parents of children at religious school. But do NOT rely on such programs. Look at evenings and weekdays, and alternate timing. Diversify your programming.
9. Seek out a Jewish connection or content where possible and appropriate, but focus first on just bringing guys together.

10. Consider running family-friendly and father-children programs to draw in younger parents, through their spouses/children. This does not mean programming family events but programming fun events that are welcoming and appealing to family members. There is a difference.
11. Meet with younger men to find out what they want. Find and designate one or more younger men to take the lead, and encourage connections and “ownership” of the initiative among your younger audience. Strategically seek out a critical mass of younger guys to attend.
12. Consider creation of a “Young Men’s Activity” subset within your club for separate events for younger men, but not as a separate organization. Don’t be afraid to have just a small gathering. Don’t be afraid of smaller, impromptu activities without the formality of traditional Men’s Club events and RSVPs.
13. Welcome younger men, but don’t crowd them, smother them, or make them feel uncomfortable.
14. This is a marathon, not a 100-yard dash. Not every event will succeed as envisioned, but keep trying and adjusting. We are changing our culture.

FIVE STEPS TO BEGIN:

1. **LAY THE FOUNDATION:** Get your own club leadership on board. Gain support from synagogue clergy and leadership.
2. **TAKE CHARGE:** Select someone from within your club to lead the effort.
3. **OPEN UP:** Identify the younger men in your club and community. Open your club membership to those outside the synagogue.
4. **MAKE THE ASK:** Talk to them personally, one on one. Ask them what they like to do, and with whom. What kind of activity would they want?
5. **EXPERIMENT:** Begin planning your first event. Repeat as often as needed.

A FEW SUGGESTED EVENTS:

The goal is to find and program activities that will interest and appeal to a younger audience of men, including singles, married men without children and young fathers. Some could involve kids, but not all. Think about what this age group would want to do when they get together. It’s not a bagel brunch. Here are just a few ideas, but look beyond them. Let us know what works for you.

- Mom's Day Off
- Drinks at a bar
- Bowling
- Billiards
- Mini-Golf
- Axe-throwing
- Climbing gym
- Pizza
- BBQ
- Minor-League game or other spectator sports
- Go-Karts
- Mother's Day craft event for dads and their kids as a gift-making event
- Daddy-Daughter dance
- Murder mystery
- Social Action/volunteering
- Hike or bicycle ride
- Other wellness/exercise program