



## Introducing Memory Café, Jewish Style

A new program series called a “Memory Café” is being offered at Temple Emanuel in Newton. A Memory Café is an innovative model of social programming that serves as a welcoming and warm gathering for people with forgetfulness, or any changes in thinking.

Temple Emanuel is honored and humbled to be the only congregation in Massachusetts to host a Memory Café that uniquely draws upon Jewish themes as conversation starters, and features Jewish-related programming. Emanuel’s Memory Café will continue at the same time on the third Thursday of the month.

Tracy Schneider, coordinator of the L’CHAIM group of seniors, is spearheading this new initiative in partnership with Dana Gitell, Director of the NewBridge on the Charles Memory Care Assisted Living Community in Dedham. NewBridge is generously co-sponsoring and underwriting these programs, which will be offered at no cost to Temple Emanuel members, as well as to participants from the broader community.



Dana Gitell and Tracy Schneider

Schneider believed that synagogues should not abandon programs for their most vulnerable population, but rather, should embrace their longtime, active and vibrant members.

Schneider read about the Memory Café movement and approached Temple Emanuel Executive Director Carrie LaVoie. After visiting Memory Cafés at area Senior Centers as well as at the Jewish Children’s and Family Services in Waltham, she was ready to create a Jewish version of Memory Café. She received guidance from Beth Soltzberg, the Director of the Alzheimer’s/Related Disorders Family Support Program of JF&CS, who developed the Massachusetts Memory Café Toolkit. Their shared ideas fostered research on forming the new Memory Café.

While visiting a Memory Café at the Newton Senior Center, Schneider met Gitell. The two women instantly decided to pool their resources to create a new and dynamic program for the Jewish community. Schneider is reaching out to the Temple Emanuel and wider community for volunteers who can greet new faces as well as help to flood the room with “others,” so that participants feel integrated and not isolated.

Schneider will grow her program by joining a Percolator Network, a monthly gathering of coordinators of area Memory Cafés that is led by Beth Soltzberg at the JF&CS office. “I can swap ideas with other Memory Café leaders, as well as problem solve,” she said, adding that Temple Emanuel will be a model for other synagogues and Jewish institutions to put their own unique spins on a Memory Café.

Questions at Temple Emanuel's Memory Café will feature Jewish themes such as “Why were you given your name? Does it have special meaning? Who were you named after?” Other questions will carry a theme, such as “Some think of Rosh Hashanah as the Birthday of the World. What do you wish for the world in the coming year?”

Renewal, birthday and Rosh Hashanah were the themes of the September event at Temple Emanuel, a creative workshop structured to “paint your hopes for the New Year.” Art therapists Elena Clamen and Esther Freidman led a workshop with painting, but also, a twist on a theme of renewal and hope. For Jews, the question of a birth name is central to the concepts of family and “Kavod,” honoring those who came before. In participants with memory loss, this question will prompt answers that may not be exact. But with the loving help of a spouse, friend, caretaker or volunteer, it is the communal give and take of a dialogue that counts.

Upcoming Memory Café programs are planned for October 20, November 17, and December 15.

Registration is required; please call 617-959-4928.