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Shalom Everyone,

Let's Get This Challah!

Welcome to the Religious and Cultural network!! I am so excited to have the privilege and opportunity to work with each and every one of you. I cannot wait to begin this spiritual journey of **culture, growing** and **finding your Jewish identity!!**

To begin, I will start by giving a brief introduction about myself. My name is Alyson Martinez and I am a sophomore at Boca Raton Community High School located in Boca Raton, Florida and I am a member of my temple youth group, BOFTY. I am a part of my school band where I serve as the current leader of my section which is the French horn!! I love dogs, music and cooking. Well, enough about me. It is time to talk about what it takes to be an RC.

When working with our religion and culture the **key** to **success** is to have **passion**. Passion is what will **drive us** to always have curiosity to learn more and will help us to show our **love and appreciation** for our religion and culture. We are the people that can **guide** others to finding their own Jewish identity and that's pretty cool if I do say so myself. With this job, a lot of **dedication and thought** goes into everything you do. It can be difficult sometimes because not everybody will have the same passion and love you have for Judaism, but it is up to us to try our best to **change** that!! No matter what happens I am **always** here and so are the other people in your network for support!! We are here to go through everything together whether it be happy or sad. We are here to **help** each other. Do **not** be afraid to use me as a resource or any other members of your network.

Working on a board is like a puzzle. Each one of the pieces are included and have their own **unique role and purpose**. Without one of the pieces, the puzzle cannot be completed and could fall apart. I am hoping that this packet can give you a good idea of how to be a **great board member**, and an even better **leader** in this community that can help educate and inspire others through religion and culture!

I cannot wait to see and hear all of the amazing things each and every one of you do in this upcoming year. I am positive that you will all inspire others and spread your passion for Judaism through this community!

B'ahava (With Love),

Alyson Martinez

NFTY-STR RCVP 5779-5780

Learn The Lingo

Being a leader in this region, here are some terms that you may be hearing

NFTY: The Reform Jewish Youth Movement

URJ: Union for Reform Judaism

STR: Southern Tropical Region

TYG: Temple Youth Group

JYG: Junior Youth Group

Asefah: A board meeting with the Regional and the General board held twice a year at Winter Regional and Spring Kallah

HUC: Hebrew Union College

RAC: Religious Action Center

WUPJ: World Union for Progressive Judaism

Camp Jenny: NFTY-STR and NFTY-SAR's mitzvah project that takes place over Memorial Day weekend at URJ Camp Coleman

Gavel Order: The specific order that NFTY-STR recognizes: President, PVP, SAVP, RCVP, CVP, MVP

PVP: Programing Vice President

SAVP: Social Action Vice President

RCVP: Religious and Cultural Vice President (more like Really Cool Vice President)

CVP: Communications Vice President

MVP: Membership Vice President

Netzer Olami: The global youth movement of the World Union for Progressive Judaism

Cue Sheet: A tool that RCVP's use to set up their services. It includes the order of the prayers, the key of the prayer, the composer and any extra notes that will benefit the service leaders.

LLTI: Liz Leadership Training Institute

Kallah (plural kallot): A regional event consisting of youth group members from all over the state who come together for a few days of making friends and memories, singing, programming and having fun!!

Steps to Success to be a STRong Leader

Adapted from Madison Rosenfield, NFTY-STR RCVP, 2018-2019

1. You are not future leaders, you are the leaders of today
2. You do not need a title to be a leader
3. Be assertive, not aggressive
4. Lift people up, don't drag them down
5. Lead, but be ready to follow sometimes
6. Be yourself! Don't be afraid to share your passion, likes and dislikes. People tend to gravitate towards those who aren't afraid to be themselves!!
7. "Fishbowl" is important!! Never forget that you are a role model for others and the things that you say or do can be magnified or taken a different way just like an actual fishbowl when you look into it.
8. Be inclusive
9. Be careful of your language because you never know who is watching or listening (gossiping, cursing)
10. Be FLEXIBLE!! Our regional director and I's favorite F word!
11. Believe in yourself and stand behind your actions. Own your moment!
12. Always give 110 percent of yourself in everything you do!

Get Ready, Get Set, GOAL!!

As a leader, it is very important to set preliminary goals for the upcoming year to help remind you of exactly what it is you want to accomplish and how you are going to go about achieving those goals. Let's set some goals together!

Personal Goals:

1.

2.

3.

Goals with being an RC:

1.

2.

3.

Goals for the community:

1.

2.

3.

Services

As an RC, one of the most amazing opportunities that you get is to collaborate with clergy and song leaders to write services!! The services that you get to write will leave a lasting impression on yourself and your fellow peers. Here are some things to remember to help the service planning process seem like a breeze!

Types of Services:

Adapted by Noa Kroyter, NFTY STR RCVP, 2017-2018

- 1. Traditional:** These are typically the simplest types of service to do. You are able to stay with the traditional order that services run in. You can add or get rid of certain prayers, but these types of services are normally very similar. You get to choose whichever variation of the prayer you want to include and you get to choose and English or Hebrew readings you would like to add in.
- 2. Thematic:** Begin by choose and outline which theme you want to do. It can be anything that you believe can connect and relate to Judaism. Then, pick out prayers in the correct order and make sure that the variations chosen relate to your theme of choice. Use any English or Hebrew readings to help convey your theme.
- 3. Experimental:** This is the service that allows you to be the most creative. Using creative and innovative ways to incorporate Judaism can help create the most amazing and life changing experiences. When you do things that are out of the ordinary it leaves a lasting impression. These services are really up to you to decide how they run. Make sure to convey a message of your choosing through a religious experience.

Things to remember:

1. You are not alone. Remember you will most likely be working with clergy and song leaders to help with different components of the service.
2. You have so many resources!! Use them!! They are here to help you and give you suggestions. They have your best interest, so trust them and take their comments into great consideration.
3. Cue sheets are the best guide. Taking the time to fill out cue sheets will help you run a smooth service while making sure you remain on track.
4. It is more than okay to ask for help. Having a passion and love for religion and culture does not mean that you will know everything about Judaism; be open to different interpretations that may be different than what you were aware of.
5. As the regional RC, I am always here for all of you for anything you need!!
6. Have fun and you can do it!!



Cue Sheets

Cue sheets are able to lay out everything that is in your service and in the order that you are doing it to help ensure you are on track and that everything is going well. They can be either very specific or very broad depending on what is useful to you. Here is an example of a planned out cue sheet.

Song/Prayer	Composer	Capo/Key	Who's On	Notes
Introduction	n/a			
Opening song: Hinei Ma Tov	Yai nai nai Sh'ma - Powers Rudy	F/2	Jordan	
I Want to Hear Somebody Pray	Nefesh Mountain	C/2	Jordan	
Lecha Dodi	Taubman	Am/2	Jordan	Verses 1-2-5-9
Shehecheyanu	Chanted		Madison	
The Tzitzit Blessing				
Tzitzit wrapping				
Barchu	Chanted		Madison	
Ma'ariv Aravim/Roll Into Dark	Katz	Am/4	Jordan	
Shema	Powers Rudy	F/2	Jordan	
V'ahavta	Chanted			
Mi Chamocha	Arian	Em/3	Jordan	
Tzitzit wrapping				
Hashkiveinu	Nichols	Em/4	Jordan	

Amidah: Adonai S'fatai Tiftach	Chanted			
Avot v'Imahot	Chanted			
Gevurot	Chanted			
Kedushah	Chanted			
Tzitzit wrapping				
Silent Prayer				
Shalom Rav	Klepper	D/o	Jordan	
Mi Shebeirach	Friedman	G/1	Cooper	
Sermon			Madison	
Tzitzit wrapping				
Aleinu	Traditional			
Mourner's Kaddish	Said mournfully			
Closing song: Kehillah Kedoshah	Nichols	G/3	Jordan	

Here is a chart that is full of information that shows the correct times/days for certain prayers, so you know what prayers to include when writing out a service!!

Adapted from Aaron Torop, NFTY-STR RCVP, 2013-2014

Prayer	Weekday AM	Weekday PM	Shabbat AM	Shabbat PM
Opening Song	☆	☆	☆	☆
Candles/Kiddush				☆
Lecha Dodi				☆
Modeh Ani	☆		☆	
Ma Tovu	☆		☆	
Elohai N'Shama	☆		☆	
Psalm 150	☆		☆	
Nisim B'chol Yom	☆		☆	
Eilu Devarim	☆		★	
Chatzi Kaddish	☆	☆	☆	☆
Barchu	☆	☆	☆	☆
Ma'ariv Aravim		☆		☆
Yotzeir Or	☆		☆	
Ahavat Olam		☆		☆
Ahavah Rabbah	☆		☆	
Sh'ma/V'ahavta	☆	☆	☆	☆
Mi Chamocha	☆	☆	☆	☆
Hashkiveinu		☆		☆
Amidah (Adonai	☆	☆	☆	☆

S'fatai, Avot, G'vurot, Kedusha)				
V'shamru/Yismechu			☆	☆
Modim	☆	☆	☆	☆
Sim Shalom	☆		☆	
Shalom Rav		☆		☆
Oseh Shalom	☆	☆	☆	☆
Yih'yu L'ratzon	☆	☆	☆	☆
Torah Service	Mondays and Thursdays only		☆	
Mi Shebeirach	☆	☆	☆	☆
Aleinu	☆	☆	☆	☆
Mourner's Kaddish	☆	☆	☆	☆
Closing Song	☆	☆	☆	☆



Service Outlines

Torah Service Outline:

Torah services although can be made creative in so many ways, have a structure of prayers and components that should be incorporated in some way the best you can. Torah services only take place on Monday, Thursday and Saturday mornings.

People rise and the Torah is taken out of the ark:

- o **Ki Mitzion:** Normally said or sung when you begin a Torah service.

Once the Torah is given to a person to hold:

- o **Baruch Shenatan**

- o **Sh'ma**

While the Torah is being walked around the congregation:

- o **Hakafah Music:** Some examples of songs that are typically sung are Sweet as Honey (Dan Nichols), Etz Chayim (Tree of Life), Romemu (Craig Taubman) and Al Shlosa D'varim (Alan Goodis).

Torah is returned to the bimah, is undressed and the Torah readers are each individually called up before each Aliyah is sung. The following sections are repeated multiple times for each Aliyot. Typically in one service there are 3 Aliyot.

- o **Blessing Before the Torah**

- o **Torah reading**

- o **Blessing After the Torah**

- o **Mi Shebeirach:** Before the final Aliyah, we sing this prayer to help those in need of healing in our community.

- o **V'zot HaTorah:** We sing this prayer once the Torah is lifted and while it is being dressed in the opposite way that it was undressed.

The Torah is returned to the Ark:

- o **Eitz Chayim**

- o **Y'hal'lu**

Havdallah Service Outline:

Havdallah services are performed Saturday evening, marking the end of Shabbat and the beginning of the new week up ahead. This service is typically short, but has so much meaning and feeling.

o **Blessing over the wine:** While the prayer is sung, raise the glass of wine in the air, but do not drink from it. This represents the sweetness of Shabbat and the goodness of the upcoming week.

o **Blessing over the spices:** While the prayer is sung, pass the spice box around the community. We do this during Shabbat because it is said that we gain an extra soul. This part of Havdallah symbolizes us saying goodbye to our extra soul until we welcome it again at Shabbat next week.

o **Blessing over the candles:** While the prayer is sung, raise the candle up in the air for your community to see. You and the members of your community will typically raise their hands up towards the candle and look at their hands by the glow from the light. The braided Havdallah candle has multiple wicks to represent the concept that everything is intertwined.

o **Blessing of Separation:** This blessing shows the difference of Shabbat from the rest of the week. After this blessing is sung, we sip the wine and then we put out the candles flame, but slowly turning it and dipping it into the cup of wine. The idea is that the longer the sizzle is, the more joyful the upcoming week will be.

o **Eliyahu HaNavi and Shavua Tov:** Both of these prayers allow us to pray for an upcoming successful week filled with joy and happiness.



Writing a D'var Torah

10 Steps to Writing a D'var Torah:

Adapted from Miranda Siler, NFTY MV RCVP, 2012-2013

Step 1: Read the Torah portion.

While this may seem like a no brainer, one might fail to see the importance of it. Don't just skim it, or look up a summary. Most of the best Dvar Torahs written are driven by a very specific piece of text. Reading the portion more than once and taking notes each time are good helpers to remembering what stands out to you. Doing this is good with any text, but especially the Torah. There is a reason why we reread it every year!

Step 2: Look at commentary.

Commentary is essential if you want to really understand a Torah portion. I have noticed that it helps reinforce my own ideas as well as introduce alternate views on the same topic to make me think. Use the resources I provided you for detailed commentaries on many different portions.

Step 3: Find your focus.

It is important to focus your D'var on one specific topic. ! If you talk about a little bit of everything, it begins to turn into a summary. The congregation will not have a new understanding of the Torah portion if you just write a summary. The final product should not be something that members of the congregation can read in the Torah themselves. Finding something that is meaningful to YOU is what will ultimately make it meaningful for others as well.

Step 4: Don't be afraid to take risks.

Find ways to relate the Torah portion to something unexpected. If you have a Joseph-and-the-Technicolor-Dreamcoat relationship with your favorite jacket, bring it up! It is important to make sure that your connections are relevant and able to easily be understood by your audience. You do not want your creativity to stand in

the way of your message that you are trying to get across. The overall goal is to create lasting insight about Judaism, humanity, or the world.

Step 5: Make some sort of outline.

Having an outline to refer to while writing your Dvar Torah makes the whole process a lot easier. This step should NOT be skipped because it allows you to know the structure of your D'var and the points that you want to get across. This step can be as simple as a few bullet points or sentences.

Step 6: Write your Dvar Torah!

A helpful tool created by ancient rabbi's is called PaRDeS (origin of the word paradise). The *P* stands for P'shat or summary. This gives the people hearing your dvar some context of what is happening. Next we get to the *R*, Remez or clue. This is where you set up what it is that you're going to talk about and identify the clue that points to the lesson you are going to share. After that we have the *D*, Drash or interpretation. This is where all of your research and thinking comes in and you share the explanations that lead up to your main lesson. Last is the *S*, Sod or secret insight. This is where you reveal the important message that you have found hidden in the text and amaze everybody in the congregation.

Step 7: Have someone read it over.

Just as you would do with any piece of writing, I always have someone look over my Dvar Torah. Some good people to ask to read over your D'var include clergy (rabbi's and cantors), your parents and your youth advisor. Take all of their comments, suggestions and edits into great consideration. All of these people want the best for you and want to help you in any way they can.

Step 8: Listen to the above person and fix your mistakes.

The more times you go over the D'var the better it sounds and you find more aspects of it that you may not have noticed previous times.

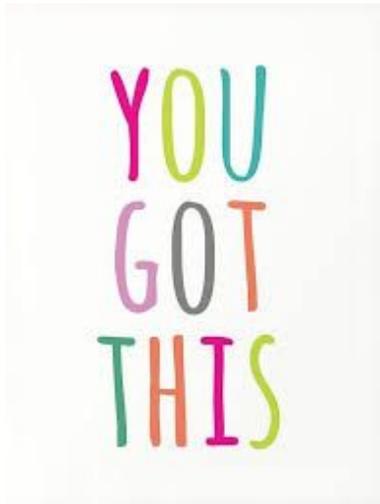
Step 9: Practice reading it out loud.

When you are reading something out loud it is easy to notice if something sounds off or awkward. This helps your editing process a lot by showing the common mistakes

when spoken out loud that you would not notice just by reading. This process can be done in front of other people or even in front of a mirror. Remember, practice makes perfect

Step 10: Deliver your Dvar Torah!

This is your moment and where everything you have worked so hard on is finally together and presented in front of people you love. This is your time to blow your community away with your words. Relax and remember you got this!!



Programming

Being an RC, you do not only have responsibility of planning amazing services, but you have the responsibility of spreading knowledge and wisdom about our faith. Fun ways to do this are through different programs!! Here are a few things to keep in mind when writing a program.

- o **Try something new and different:** Many people when it comes to talking about Judaism or Israel are scared to go out of their comfort zones with programming. Go out of the box and be creative. It is a good way to create symbolism and have a fun time while talking about serious topics.
- o **Connect your topic to Judaism:** When it comes to having fun and being creative with programming, do not forget the reason you are doing this program. Your program does not have to be specifically centered around a Jewish holiday or celebration, but connect at least one aspect of the program to something relating to Judaism.
- o **Do not be one-sided:** Typically with Jewish and Israel related programs, discussions are a large part. When asking questions, try and make them as neutral as you can. We do not want anyone to feel as if the leader of the program created these questions based on his/her views. We want everyones opinion to feel valued. These issues can be uncomfortable to talk about. With these programs we want these issues to be less uncomfortable and want to have participants create new understandings and form their own opinions.
- o **Use your resources:** There are so many resources whether it be people, texts or the internet to help you thrive. Use websites for researching, texts to help back information up and people for ideas and suggestions. Feel free to reach out to people such as clergy, your youth advisor, NFTY STR PVP and me!!

Things to do outside NFTY-STR

o **NFTY in Israel:** This summer, consider traveling to Israel with a group of NFTY-ites!! You get the chance to explore areas in the Holy Land, meet new people and strengthen friendships in your community. This program will allow you to find your own Jewish identity. If you decide to do the L'dor Vador experience, you have the opportunity to travel to Prague and Krakow before going to Israel.

www.nftyisrael.org.

o **Heller High:** Spend a semester of high school in Israel!! This program allows you to continue your high school experience by taking AP and IB courses, SAT's and ACT's. Take this opportunity to immerse yourself in the land and culture of Israel, while making new friendships that will last a lifetime. www.hellerhigh.org.

o **NFTY Mitzvah Corps:** This program allows NFTY-ites to have the opportunity to make a difference with social justice all over the world. There are multiple places to do Mitzvah Corps within the U.S. such as LA, New Jersey and Chicago, but there are also multiple places outside the U.S. such as Israel and Costa Rica.

www.mitzvahcorps.com.

o **L' Taken:** The Religious Action Center (RAC) hosts a series of social justice seminars in Washington D.C. Here you will get the opportunity to learn the ways Jewish values can influence political stances that the RAC takes and also lobby to politicians. www.rac.org/ltaken-social-justice-seminars.

o **Camp Jenny:** This is an amazing opportunity where NFTY-STR and NFTY-SAR (our neighboring region) come together to create a magical camp experience for the inner-city kids of Atlanta, Georgia's FL Stanton Elementary School. Although applications for Camp Jenny 2019 have been decided and closed already, consider applying next year!! www.campjenny.nfty.org.

If you are interested in any of these programs please reach out to me!! I am here to explain anything and answer any questions you may have. I highly encourage all of you to try at least one of these programs. NFTY-STR is able to provide scholarships as needed, if money is an issue!!

About Me

Name: Alyson Martinez

Nickname: Aly

Temple Youth Group: BOFTY

School: Boca Raton Community High School

Favorite Jewish Holiday: Passover

Favorite TV Show: The Office, Grey's Anatomy, 90210

Favorite Jewish Food: Latkes or Matzah Ball Soup

Least Favorite Jewish Food: Chopped Liver

Favorite Color: Blue

Favorite Subject in School: English and History

My Social Media and Contact Information:

o **Instagram:** @alysonmartinez_

o **Facebook:** Alyson Martinez

o **Email:** My personal is alysonemartinez@gmail.com , but after June 1st you can also reach me at str-rcvp@nfty.org

o **Cell Phone:** 954-815-5568

Thank You

Shalom again RC's,

I hope you have all enjoyed your time in this network!! I hope you were able to grow as a leader, learn new things and make connections with other members of the network. This is going to be an extremely exciting year for all of us!! All of you are strong, passionate and amazing leaders in our community. You all have the ability to shape others jewish identities and guide their own spiritual journey!

Please never forget to use me as a resource for **anything** you need. I am here to answer questions, help guide you with a service or program and even to just talk about life!!

I just really want to thank each and every one of you for spending your time with me and being so amazing. I hope you all leaving feeling as if we have built our own trusted and loved "family" within our network. I am also hoping after this that we can continue to grow these bonds and friendships and become closer with one another!

Congratulations on this amazing accomplishment and never forget that you are a leader. I cannot wait to see what each and every one of you do for this world and our community and I am so grateful to have this opportunity to share some of these experiences with you!!

P.S. - I would love to attend some of your own TYG planned events/ services so feel free to reach out and send information!!

Todah Rabah (Thank You),

Alyson Martinez

NFTY-STR RCVP 5779-5780