

# SHABBAT: HOW DO YOU RECHARGE?

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR FACILITATORS

ASK **BIG**  
QUESTIONS

**Hillel**  
International

**Note for Facilitators:** This document is designed to be the centering point for a group conversation. You should plan for the conversation to last between 60 and 90 minutes, depending on group size. Most parts are meant to be read by members of the group, so you should plan to ask participants to take turns reading sections. Alternatively, you can choose the first reader of a section, and then that reader chooses the next reader. Additional guidelines and suggestions for planning and leading a successful conversation can be found at the end of this guide.

# WELCOME

Before we begin, we need to agree on a few things:

- In order for our conversation to be as rich as it can be, we need everyone to feel safe to really share and really listen. Therefore, we agree not to share others' comments outside of this space.
- Our aim is to create a space where we can understand others and understand ourselves, not to give advice or to argue ideas of objective truth. With that in mind, in this conversation we will agree to speak in the first-person, about our own truth.
- We will assume good faith in one another.
- We will open ourselves to listen and learn from one another.
- We won't rush to fill the silence.

Can we all agree to these things? If you feel, for whatever reason, that you cannot agree to these things, then please take this opportunity to exit. By staying in the circle, we all signify our intention to abide by these commitments.

## ASK & SHARE

Let's take a moment to introduce ourselves. Please take a moment to think of one thing that helps you refill your sense of joy, restfulness and energy when you feel depleted or run-down. What helps you feel recharged? You can use the space below to make some notes to yourself.

**Note for Facilitators:** Give people a moment to organize their thoughts before you start asking for volunteers. It may be helpful to model this introduction for participants, so consider introducing yourself first. Be sure everyone states their name. You don't need to go in order around a circle. Allow people to introduce themselves when the spirit moves them.

# LEARN

We live in hectic times. Our culture has shifted towards increased technological connection and, often with it, an expectation that people will respond to any kind of request even late at night and early in the morning. Between 1970 and 1990, the average worker put in an estimated 164 extra hours of paid labor a year, and it has gone up since then. One study suggests that 40% of American adults get less than 7 hours of sleep on weekdays, and another claims that about 60% of us are sometimes or often rushed at mealtimes. As a result of all this busyness, we don't often have a chance to rest or recharge—to stop doing so much and to just be.

The Jewish tradition has had a designated rest time since, well, the very beginning. In the Torah, the story of the creation of the world ends with a day of rest—a set-apart time. Later descriptions of Shabbat, the Sabbath day, make it clear that everyone in the community is meant to rest—not only those with privilege, but workers, the stranger passing through, and even the animals! Judaism considers it an important activity; elsewhere, the Torah talks about the act of shabbat v'yinafash, resting and restoring oneself. Nefesh means “soul” in Hebrew, so this kind of resting is a sort of a re-souling, a recharging of one's soul, or spirit. Many believe that doing so is indispensable; the secular Zionist essayist Ahad Ha-Am once wrote, “More than the Jewish people have preserved Shabbat, Shabbat has preserved the Jewish people.”

An organization called Reboot put together a “Sabbath Manifesto,” ([sabbathmanifesto.org](http://sabbathmanifesto.org)) with ten key principles designed to help people slow down and bring the spirit of Shabbat into their lives.

These are the ten principles. Please read through them twice:

- Avoid technology
- Connect with loved ones
- Nurture your health
- Get outside
- Avoid commerce
- Light candles
- Drink wine
- Eat bread
- Find silence
- Give back

Then, please read this quote from 20th century theologian Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel from his landmark book, *The Sabbath*.

To set apart one day a week for freedom, a day on which we would not use the instruments which have been so easily turned into weapons of destruction, a day for being with ourselves, a day of detachment from the vulgar, of independence from external obligations, a day on which we stop worshipping the idols of technical civilization, a day on which we use no money, a day of armistice in the economic struggle with our fellow men and the forces of nature—is there any institution that holds out a greater hope for man's progress than the Sabbath?

As we reflect on this text, here are a few questions to consider:

## Interpretive Questions

- Do you see any patterns emerge from the items on the list? Are there one or several unifying principles?
- What sort of experience do these actions seem to encourage?
- Which of these principles seem communal? Solitary?
- What does Heschel's description of the Sabbath add to or change in your reading of the Reboot list?

## Reflective Questions

- Which of the principles from the Reboot list or described by Heschel are you most drawn to? Why?
- Do any of them challenge you or make you feel uncomfortable? If so, what makes them uncomfortable or challenging?
- Is there something missing from the list that you think should be there?
- When do you feel that you need to recharge?

Use the space below to write some notes to yourself.

**Note for Facilitators:** This is the heart of the conversation. Give people several minutes to prepare their thoughts. Then invite people to divide into pairs or triads and share their responses. Give them a good amount of time for this—10-20 minutes. It may be longer, depending on how much momentum they develop. Then reconvene in the large group and ask people to share from their small-group conversations.

A few tips on facilitation:

- The large-group debrief should take another 20-30 minutes.
- Begin by asking for a volunteer to share an insight from their conversation. You might begin by asking, "What came up?"
- When each person is done, thank them for their comment.
- Don't feel a need to rush or to fill silences.
- If someone begins to monopolize the time, you might say, "I want to be sure that everyone has a chance to speak, so let's try to make room for another person."

For other ideas on facilitation, please refer to the AIR-IT guide at the end of this document. When you sense that the group has finished sharing its responses to these questions, invite people to share any further insights or reflections from the conversation, before moving to the conclusion.

## DO

We all need time to pause and to recharge. Reflective time allows us to restore our energy, to gestate on questions rather than to react immediately to them, to see the bigger picture, to give our creativity a little bit of breathing room. Then when we move forward into our regular lives, we do so with a renewed sense of vigor, excitement, perspective, and insight. But, especially these days, it's rare that reflective time just lands in our laps. We have to make the decision to give it to ourselves. We have to choose to recharge.

So here are some final questions to consider:

- What is one action that you want to bring into your life as a result of this conversation?
- What will help you make that change stick?
- What will you do in the next 24 hours to recharge yourself?

Please take a moment to think about these questions, and if you'd like, to share them with the group.

**Note for Facilitators:** Give people a minute to reflect on the question. Then ask anyone who wants to share to do so. When you sense that the group has finished sharing its response to this question, invite people to share any further insights or reflections from the conversation, before moving to the conclusion.

# AIR-IT: A GUIDE TO FACILITATING CONVERSATION

## A: ASK BIG QUESTIONS.

BIG QUESTION	HARD QUESTION
<b>Anyone can answer it.</b> Example: "For whom are we responsible?"	<b>Experts will answer it best.</b> Example: "What's the best economic policy for the United States?"
<b>Focuses on wisdom and experience.</b> Example: "What's the best advice you've ever received?"	<b>Focuses on intelligence and skill.</b> Example: "Are human beings naturally good or evil?"
<b>Uses plain language.</b>	<b>Uses technical language.</b>
<b>Directed at a subject (me, you, us).</b> Example: "What could we sacrifice to change the world?"	<b>Directed at an object (it).</b> Example: "Is it better to cut spending or raise taxes to balance the federal budget?"
<b>Opens up space and invites people in as participants.</b>	<b>Closes space and leads people to feel like spectators.</b>
<b>Leads to sharing personal stories.</b>	<b>Leads to debates about truth claims.</b>
<b>Emphasizes a both/and approach.</b>	<b>Emphasizes an either/or approach.</b>

## I: INVITE PERSONAL STORIES.

Big questions lead to sharing personal stories. The facilitator acts to support this by:

- Creating the space (physical, intellectual, emotional, spiritual) of trust in which these stories can be shared and honored.
- Weaving: Summarize, reflect back, and keep the stories and observations tethered to the big question. This helps the group to maintain integrity and not feel that it is fragmenting or fraying.

## R: REALLY LISTEN.

Ask Big Questions conversations are marked by real listening. The facilitator's reflecting back and weaving is crucial to this.

Participants should be able to answer questions like: "What did so-and-so say? What do you think they meant when they said it?

What did it evoke in you?"

## **IT: USE INTERPRETIVE THINGS.**

Ask Big Questions conversations often use a text, poem, artwork, song, natural object or other “interpretive thing” to help center the conversation and create a common point of access for all participants.

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN PREPARING FOR A DISCUSSION**

### **Where?**

- Does the place where you’re having the conversation create a space in which people can feel safe?
- Is it a closed space? Does it have a door you can close to ensure privacy and confidentiality when needed?
- What can you do to make the space visually appealing or lovely? Does it have windows to let in light? Do you want to play some music?
- Can everyone sit comfortably in a circle?

### **When?**

- Are you scheduling the conversation at a time when everyone can be physically awake and present?
- Will people be hungry? Will you provide food or drink?
- Will they be tired or sleepy after a meal?
- How long will the conversation be?
- How will you break up the time if necessary?

### **Who and How?**

- How many people will participate? Will there be enough to sustain diverse conversation? Will there be too many to keep the conversation centered?
- How will you get the word out and then remind people?
- Do you need to make any special arrangements for people with special needs (i.e. physical disabilities)?
- Greetings – Who will welcome people to the conversation and how will they do it?
- How will you have everyone introduce themselves? (Big Questions are great for introductions!)
- How will you close the conversation?
- How will you follow up with people?
- How will you capture their contact information?

### **What About You?**

- What will you do to get yourself ready?

This conversation is powered by Ask Big Questions®, which was developed, launched, and scaled by Hillel International, and is a registered trademark of Hillel International.



If you enjoyed this conversation, we encourage you to check out REBOOT's Sabbath Manifesto, a creative project designed to slow down the lives in an increasingly hectic world. Their National Day of Unplugging is on March 7-8, 2014. Join us in taking the pledge to unplug from technology at [www.nationaldayofunplugging.com](http://www.nationaldayofunplugging.com).



Hillel International is the largest Jewish student organization in the world, building connections with emerging adults at more than 550 colleges and universities, and inspiring them to direct their own path. During their formative college years, students are challenged to explore, experience, and create vibrant Jewish lives.

# SHABBAT: HOW DO YOU RECHARGE?

CONVERSATION GUIDE FOR PARTICIPANTS

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