



Balfour Declaration

Self-Determination

40-60-Minute Learning Experience

Before beginning, check out our [Facilitator's Guide](#), which explains how to use this learning activity as a set induction prior to watching the video.

Self-determination can be explored through many lenses, including personal (a person is able to fulfill their own goals and dreams, and live their life as an authentic self) and national (when a country is viewed as autonomous and is able to govern itself). In either situation, the entity (individual or country) needs outside validation from allies and upstanders in order to achieve its dreams and become the best version of itself. Through interactive education experiences—such as gameplay, debate, role play and discussion—participants will explore the challenges of achieving goals when there are no allies, as well as the feeling of success when upstanders help them accomplish what they set out to do.

Activities (20-30 min)

Supplies: Blue tape; pens and paper

1. Captain May I? (Aka Mother May I?) (6-10 min)

- a. The goal of the game is for one player to reach the Captain first.
- b. If you have a group larger than 10, divide into two or more sub-groups (so each group is no more than 10 people).
- c. Place a line of blue tape on one end of an open area. Ask everyone to stand shoulder-to-shoulder on this line.
- d. Designate a volunteer as Captain and have him/her stand on the opposite end of the room with his/her back to the group (or blindfolded).
- e. Have each one of the players take turns asking the Captain a movement question: "Captain may I take X number of steps forward?" The Captain can respond in one of three ways: "Yes, you may," or "No, you may not" or "No, you may not, but you may move X steps (forward or backward)."
- f. If a player forgets to say "Captain May I?" before their question, they must go back to the starting line.



- g. The players can be creative and ask movement questions like skipping, cartwheeling, crab-walking, etc. Likewise, the Captain can instruct them to act creatively in their movements.
- h. Discuss (if you have separate sub groups, bring them back together):
 - i. How did it feel when the Captain told you that you could not move?
 - ii. How did it feel knowing that no one else could help you achieve your goal?
 - iii. As the Captain, how did it feel to have all the power over everyone else's success or failure?
 - iv. Ask: How would you define self-determination? Was this present in this activity? Why or why not?

2. Freeze Tag (10-12 min)

- a. Play this game in a wide-open room or outside on a field.
- b. Choose a person to be "it." The person who is "it" is the player who can "freeze" other players.
- c. When the game begins, everyone runs away from the person who is "it." The one who is "it" chases after other players, trying to tag (tap) them.
- d. If a person is successfully tagged, he or she must "freeze" in place (stand still and not move).
- e. Frozen people cannot move until another player un-freezes them (taps them to return them to normal).
- f. Unfrozen people should try to un-freeze others while avoiding getting tagged by the person who is "it."
- g. The player who is "it" wins by freezing all players.
- h. Depending on timing, play more rounds.
- i. Discuss:
 - i. If you were frozen, what did it feel like to have to stand and watch everyone else play while you couldn't?
 - ii. When you were frozen, did others actively try to help you un-freeze?
 - iii. If you were being ignored and not getting help to become unfrozen, what did you say to try and get help?
 - iv. If you were unfrozen, were you more concerned about your own safety or about helping others get unfrozen?
 - v. If you were unfrozen, how did it feel to release someone who was previously frozen?
 - vi. If you were "it": what did it feel like to know you could control the movements of others when you tagged them?
 - vii. Can someone define "ally" for us?



- viii. How important are the “unfrozen allies” in this game? What would happen if the unfrozen only cared for themselves and didn’t work to unfreeze others?

3. Goal Meditation (13-18 min)

- a. Have the participants find a comfortable, private space. Hand out pens and paper.
- b. Ask participants to write down a goal they have (can be short-term or long-term) in the following categories:
 - i. Family (parent or sibling relationship, spouse, children, etc.)
 - ii. Academics (high school, college, beyond, etc.)
 - iii. Career (profession, interests, etc.)
 - iv. Personal (personality traits, physical appearance, hobbies, health, etc.)
- c. Have the participants find two other people to sit with and share:
 - i. What goals came to your mind that surprised you?
 - ii. What goals came to your mind that are easiest to achieve?
 - iii. What goals came to your mind that you think are very unique compared to other people’s?
- d. Bring everyone back together and discuss:
 - i. When you think about the goals that are the hardest to fulfill, what makes them the most difficult?
 - ii. When you think about the goals you meditated on, which ones will you need the help of others to fulfill? How and why?

Processing: Grade 8-Adult (10-15 min)

- Did you experience freedom and self-determination today? What did those moments feel like?
- Did you experience restriction and confinement today? What did those moments feel like?
- In considering the role of others in our own success, what did you encounter today? Did you learn anything new that surprised you?
- In Ethics of the Fathers, the great sage Hillel states, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me?” (1:14). What does he mean by this? What does it say about self-determination? He then adds: “But if I am only for myself, who am I?” How does this statement jive with the first?



Additional Processing: Grade 11-Adult

- Think about a time when you helped someone else achieve their goals. Do you think they would have been successful without your support? Why or why not?
- In considering your vision for your own goals, do expectations others have of you positively or negatively influence your feelings about those goals?
- In a world where we are interdependent with others, can we truly have independent goals or must we always take into consideration their impact on others?
- Most Jewish sages maintain that human beings have free will. Rambam (Maimonides) writes, “Free will is granted to all people: If one wanted to turn oneself to a good path and to be righteous he has free will, and if one wanted to turn oneself to an evil path and be wicked he has free will” (Mishneh Torah, Laws of Repentance 5:1). How does this impact your religious life, if at all? Is practicing Judaism more or less challenging (or meaningful) when you do so of your own free will?

Video Viewing and Post-Video Reflection (15–20 min)

After doing these learning activities with your participants, watch the [video](#) together. Then use these discussion and reflection questions for a final conversation and wrap-up to the program.

- In considering the history of Israel, what ultimately put Israel on the map: Zionist visionaries and activists, or diplomatic, international support? Is it a combination, or is it one more than the other?
- Imagine you were a young adult in 1917. How do you think you would have felt upon hearing the Balfour Declaration? Describe the emotions you would feel when hearing that this declaration was made.
- Many would say that the establishment of the State of Israel was the fulfillment of centuries-long yearning for Jewish self-determination. In what ways does having a land of one’s own shape a nation?