



All of the service of Hashem is dependent upon the improvement of one's character traits.

Vilna Gaon - Even Shleima, Chapter 1

Shmiras HaLashon Module Packet 2

מות וחיים ביד לשון ואהביה יאכל פריה.

***Death and life are in the power of the tongue;
those who love [to speak properly] will enjoy its rewards.***

Mishlei/Proverbs, Chapter 18, Verse 21

לב צדיק יהגה לענות...

The heart of the righteous thinks how to answer...

Mishlei/Proverbs, Chapter 15, Verse 28

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Use of Material

The material in this *ACTT Module Packet* is intended for the use of the ACTT organization’s members and any other individuals interested in creating and sustaining meaningful changes in their lives. If an organization is interested in using this material, the ACTT organization would appreciate your contacting us. Thank you.

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ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon* Module – Packet 2

Specific Goal Suggested for *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Module

To speak about every family member in a positive manner that is never derogatory or damaging and does not generate any animosity between people.

General Goal of *Shmiras HaLashon* Module

To develop an awareness and a mindset that results in consistently thinking before talking and then speaking in a positive manner that is never derogatory or damaging and does not generate any animosity between people.

Module Duration

This module is part 2 of the *Shmiras HaLashon* series and will last for 7 weeks.

To Do List

- If you are not yet a member of the ACTT Organization, fill out a membership application and submit it – see Membership page of www.actt613.org or ACTT Welcome Kit
- Fill out the “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Commitment Form”, keep a copy for yourself and submit a copy to the organization – see Module page of www.actt613.org or this Module Packet’s Appendix
- On a daily basis:
 - Follow the Learning Schedule and record your *Shmiras HaLashon* activity/action in your “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
 - Record your maintenance activity/action (from the *Ahavas Chesed*, *Judging Favorably*, *Kavanah During Davening*, *Hakaras HaTov*, and *Anger Management for Positive Results* modules) in your “ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Activity Log” in this Module Packet’s Appendix – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions
- Participate in the chizuk activities, as desired:
 - ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 2* kickoff event and face-to-face discussion group meetings
 - ACTT online discussion group and e-mail list
 - Read inspirational material from sources recommended by the ACTT organization and also distributed by the ACTT organization
 - Recommend inspirational material to the ACTT membership and submit inspirational material to be distributed to all the ACTT members

Shmiras HaLashon Resources

The following are some resources for learning about *Shmiras HaLashon*:

- Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion - The concepts and laws of proper speech as formulated by Sefer Chofetz Chaim by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman; Artscroll/Mesorah; ISBN: 1-57819-457-1
- Chofetz Chaim: A Lesson A Day - The concepts and laws of proper speech arranged for daily study by Rabbi Shimon Finkelman and Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz; Artscroll/Mesorah; ISBN: 0-89906-321-7
- Guard Your Tongue – A Practical Guide to the Laws of Lashon Hara based on the Chofetz Chaim by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin; Gross Brothers Printing Co.
- Apples of Gold: The Art of Pure Speech by Rabbi David Bernstein; Torah Umesorah Publications in conjunction with Discovery Books; ISBN: 0-914131-91-5
- Gossip: Ten Pathways To Eliminate It From Your Life And Transform Your Soul by Lori Palatnik with Bob Burg; Simcha Press; ISBN: 0757300553
- For additional books, tapes, and other material on Shmiras HaLashon see The Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation (CCHF) catalog – call CCHF, www.chofetzchaimusa.org, at 866-593-8399

Gossip: The Triple Murder Threat

by Lori Palatnik and Bob Burg

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http://www.aish.com/literacy/mitzvahs/Gossip_The_Triple_Murder_Threat.asp

Gossip can be more powerful than biological weapons.

The sages teach that each time someone speaks badly of others, it is like killing three people.

Who is dying?

1. The Person Speaking

In whose eyes is this happening? On one level, the person speaking is being killed in the eyes of G-d. The Almighty has given that person the gift of speech, and he or she is using it to pit one person against another, to put others down and to speak of other people's private business.

On another level, he or she is being killed in the eyes of all those who are listening. When you have "the goods" on some-one and say to a group of people, "Guess what? I heard the real story about so-and-so's marital breakup," what happens?

Everyone leans in to hear the juicy gossip, and you become the center of attention. You are, in a sense, being crowned! You become the queen or king of this moment.

But it's just a moment. If you are known as the type of person eager to speak badly of others or quick to share "the dirt" at any given time, you will not be the person others come to for advice or with whom

they entrust their lives. After all, if you are so quick to speak badly of others, everyone knows that soon they will be fodder for your social hobby.

When Bob was a television newscaster, he was also an avid speaker -- as well as listener -- of gossip. According to Bob, "When I was with certain people, it felt like we were best friends; as though it were the two of us against the world. But I also knew that the same was true for whomever my 'friend' was with at the time. If they talked about others so viciously, what did that tell me would be said about me when I wasn't the 'best friend of the moment'?"

Interestingly enough, not only did most of Bob's coworkers not trust people like this, but they didn't like them either. Of course, that didn't stop anybody from listening to all the juicy gossip.

The truth is that at any moment you can be the popular one, but in the long run, you are lessened in everyone's eyes if you gossip. When you speak badly of others, it is like committing slow suicide.

Did you ever wonder why gossip is called "the low down" and "the dirt"? Let's face it, putting others down only brings us down. Some time ago, someone in my evening class on ethics shared the following story with everyone in attendance:

I was attending a ceremony at our house of worship and my sister-in-law walked in dressed very inappropriately! She was wearing a revealing top and I just couldn't believe it. I pointed this out to my husband and told him that his sister had done it again. When will she ever learn?

But my husband did not respond. He just stood there and stared at me. It's maddening. He does it every time I speak about people. Don't you think he should say something to his sister, or perhaps I should?

I responded by saying, "First, do not say anything to your sister-in-law. She won't be able to hear it from you. If you have that type of relationship, chances are she won't be able to hear the weather report from you, let alone a comment about her choice of dress -- as this can often be a challenging relationship.

"Second, when you speak negatively about others, who is being lessened in your husband's eyes?"

The woman didn't have to think long. "I am," she whispered.

"You've got a good guy there," I answered. "Don't just hang on to him. Learn from him."

2. The Person You Are Speaking About

The person who is the topic of discussion at hand is obviously being killed. Such people are going about their business innocently, oblivious to the fact that you are speaking about them and affecting the way others view them. Irreparable damage can be done with every word, whether the information is true or not.

A person's reputation -- their good name -- is certainly a major part of his or her joy of existence. Money can always be earned back fairly easily, but a reputation for honesty, integrity, and kindness, for being a loving husband, a good parent, a charitable and righteous person, while developed over years, can be wiped away instantly in a flash of evil speech. Depending upon the circumstances, it may be nearly impossible to restore it to its original level.

The Japanese have a term that describes very well what happens when a person's reputation is damaged: The person is said to have "lost face," as if they no longer exist.

3. The Person Listening

The Talmud says that the person who is damaged most of all is the one who is listening. Worse than gossiping is listening to gossip!

We all know deep down that, although almost everyone does it, speaking badly about people is plain wrong. The person you are slicing up is being harmed to no end. Yet, we wonder, why in the eyes of G-d is the passive listener the one who is doing the most harm?

The answer lies in the word passive. Of all three parties, the listener is the only one who has the ability to stop the evil speech in its tracks. The speaker has already made the decision to speak badly of others. The one being spoken about has no control over the situation. The listener is the only one who has the power to change the course of the conversation, which is why G-d puts the onus on the listener.

My son pointed out to me that reading gossip is even worse than listening to it! Sometimes, he said, we are in a situation in which someone will blurt out something negative about a person, and we have heard it before we have had a chance to block it. However, reading gives us time to decide whether or not this is something we want to know about. If an article is a juicy exposé on a person's life -- exposing private details that are surely embarrassing and damaging to that person's reputation -- why do we spend even one second of our lives reading it, other than for a momentary thrill or as a sick form of entertainment at someone's expense? There can be no excuse that we couldn't help hearing something that was suddenly blurted out. Clearly we would have made a conscious choice to "listen" to things we shouldn't.

Reputations are destroyed, marriages are ruined, partnerships are broken -- there is no end. Are you beginning to understand why Bob and I are so emphatic about one of the world's favorite pastimes?

Keep in mind that these biblical laws apply not only to talking about people, but also about organizations, groups of people and an individual you probably never expected -- you. Yes, you are not allowed to speak badly about yourself! If you put yourself down, you are transgressing these laws. By doing so, in essence you are saying that G-d blew it. G-d doesn't blow it. He made you in His image, and G-d doesn't make junk. So forget the self-deprecating dialogue. You are unique. You are special. You have potential for greatness. Now use that potential for good.

Excerpted from Gossip -- Ten Pathways to Eliminate It From Your Life and Transform Your Soul by Lori Palatnik and Bob Burg, Simcha Press:

The Ten Pathways of Positive Speech

Better pointed bullets than pointed speech. Otto von Bismarck

The Ten Pathways of Positive Speech

1. **Speak No Evil.** Say only positive statements. Let words of kindness be on your tongue.
2. **Hear No Evil.** Refuse to listen to gossip, slander and other negative forms of speech.

3. **Don't Rationalize Destructive Speech.** Excuses like "But it's true" or "I'm only joking" or "I can tell my spouse anything" just don't cut it.
4. **See No Evil.** Judge people favorably, the way you would want them to judge you.
5. **Beware of Speaking Evil Without Saying an Evil Word.** Body language and even positive speech can bring tremendous destruction.
6. **Be Humble; Avoid Arrogance.** These will be your greatest weapons against destructive speech.
7. **Beware of Repeating Information.** Loose lips sink ships. Even positive information needs permission before being repeated.
8. **Honesty Really Is the Best Policy -- Most of the Time.** Be careful to always tell the truth, unless it will hurt others, break your own privacy or publicize your accomplishments.
9. **Learn to Say "I'm Sorry."** Everyone makes mistakes. If you've spoken badly about someone, clear it up immediately.
10. **Forgive.** If you have been wronged, let it go.

ACTT Module Packet Appendix



ACTT Commitment Form – Shmiras HaLashon 2 Module

Remember, it is better to commit to less – you can always do more!

Please PRINT all information

This commitment does not constitute a vow; I am doing the following, bli neder

From ___/___/___ To ___/___/___

In memory of _____

As a zechus for:

a refuah shelaimah for _____

a shidduch for _____

parnassa for _____

other _____

- ___ *Shmiras HaLashon act(s) daily in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
- *Performing one or more of the following maintenance activities in a ☺ mood*
(ACTT recommends a total of 1-2 acts daily – the *ACTT Activity/Action Ideas* has suggestions)
 - ___ *Ahavas Chesed act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Judging Favorably act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Kavanah During Davening act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Hakaras HaTov act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
 - ___ *Anger Management for Positive Results act(s)* *daily or* *weekly*
- *Learning ___ minutes daily from* (ACTT recommends 5 minutes daily):
 - The ACTT *Shmiras HaLashon 2 Learning Schedule Book* (see *ACTT Daily Activity Log*)
 - Other _____

Please PRINT all information

Name: _____ Date _____

Email address: _____ Tel. number _____

Address: _____

☺ *Be happy with your ability to Improve Yourself and Grow!* ☺

Please email form: commitment@actt613.org or mail: ACTT, 48 Edgemount Road, Edison, NJ 08817



ACTT Activity/Action Ideas

Acknowledgements:

- 1) Some Ideas for Acts of Chesed were adapted from Areyvut's 2005 "A Kindness a Day Calendar: 365 Ways to Make a Difference", see website: www.areyvut.org
- 2) Some of the ideas for Judging Favorably were adapted from "The Other Side of the Story" by Yehudis Samet
- 3) Some of the ideas for Kavanah During Davening were adapted from Praying with Fire by Rabbi Heshy Kleinman
- 4) Ideas for Improving Anger Management were adapted from Anger The Inner Teacher @ www.aish.com/spirituality/growth/Anger_The_Inner_Teacher.asp

IDEAS FOR SHMIRAS HALASHON

<p>Think before speaking Pause to think about what to say and how to say it before responding to someone Give each person the benefit of the doubt Train yourself to avoid judging others Think positive thoughts and avoid negative thoughts Stay calm and avoid getting angry Avoid joking around that could lead to making fun of others Develop a character of humility - avoid arrogance</p>	<p>Be extra careful with Shmiras HaLashon for 1-2 hour(s) each day Never give up hope of one's ability to guard one's tongue Accept the idea that it is possible to speak without gossiping Train yourself to avoid complaining about others Learn the laws of Shmiras HaLashon Walk away from a group that is speaking Lashon Hara If someone starts speaking Lashon Hara to you, respectfully ask them to stop Realize and say to yourself: "It's Not That Important"</p>
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IDEAS FOR ACTS OF CHESED

<p>Offer to run an errand for a friend Cheerfully greet someone Bake an unexpected treat for a friend Remember someone's birthday Call someone going thru a difficult time Leave a friendly note for a family member Listen patiently to others Clean up after dinner without being asked Call someone who lives alone Greet everyone you see with a smile Introduce yourself to someone Apologize for something you've done Take out the garbage without being asked</p>	<p>Give someone an unexpected compliment Spend time with a child with a disability Help strangers in shul feel welcome Take an elderly person shopping Pay attention to what people are saying Spend quality time with family & friends Call or visit someone who is sick Cook a meal for a person in need Visit someone who may be lonely Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while Say thanks - no matter how small the deed Help a child with his / her homework Compliment someone who helps you</p>	<p>Give someone an encouraging note When asked to do something, respond right away in a cheerful and willing manner Drive someone to the doctor Help out family members even if you're busy Help someone find a job Buy a gift for a loved one for no reason Greet everyone with a pleasant "good morning" Write a letter to an elderly person Take a neighbor's garbage cans in from the curb Call someone who recently lost a loved one Congratulate siblings on recent accomplishments</p>
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ACTT Activity/Action Ideas (continued)

IDEAS FOR JUDGING FAVORABLY

Don't jump to conclusions
 Judge your neighbor's actions favorably
 "Judge your fellow man fairly" (Leviticus 19:15)
 Look for a possible explanation in another's behavior
 Give your friend the benefit of the doubt
 Look for the good in others
 "Judge all people to the side of merit" (Ethics of the Fathers 1:6)
 Think about "Love your neighbor like yourself", and apply it to others. We all find excuses for ourselves.

Realize that your friend did not see you carrying packages when he/she passed by
 Remember, it could be a miscommunication...
 Are we missing any facts?
 Look for people's strengths
 Remember, things are not always what they seem!
 Try to explain... not complain about other people's actions
 Focus on solutions - not recriminations
 Remember the excuses one makes for oneself - apply these excuses to the one who wronged you

IDEAS FOR IMPROVING KAVANAH DURING DAVENING

Meditate for 5 minutes before davening
 Write translations to difficult words in your siddur
 Think about all Hashem has given you
 Say the words, "I am standing before Hashem" out loud
 Remember that Kavanah During Davening is a Halachik requirement of prayer
 Pronounce each word slowly and clearly
 Use a siddur, even for Tefillos you know by heart
 Establish a specific place for davening
 Concentrate for 3 seconds on each word of a specific tefillah

Learn the meanings of words you do not know
 Select one prayer a week to say with more kavanah
 Write down your favorite phrases from davening and focus on them when you daven
 Arrive before the minyan begins to daven and be ready when they start
 When davening at home, remove distractions from around you
 Select one word a day to say with more kavanah
 Select one phrase a day to say with more kavanah
 Before you start to daven, review what Hashem has given you in the last 24 hours

IDEAS FOR IMPROVING ANGER MANAGEMENT

In the past, when you have been able to overcome anger quickly, how did you do it?
 Learn from people who are able to remain calm in situations that get you angry
 Learn from people who are able to let go of their anger easily
 Give anger a chance to subside before speaking by counting from 1 to 10, 1 to 20, etc.
 When you notice that you are feeling angry, breathe slowly and deeply, exhale slowly
 When you are about to get angry because of something that someone did to you, focus on some good quality of that person

Use physical exercise to release anger: take a brisk walk, run, dance, jump rope, etc.
 Meditate on: "Ein od milvado - There is nothing else besides G-d"
 When you get angry, look at yourself in a mirror to see and hear yourself as others see and hear you when you are angry
 Write down all your angry thoughts in a letter addressed to the person you are angry at, but do not send it
 When you are about to get angry, ask yourself, "How important is this in my life?"



ACTT Activity/Action Ideas (continued)

IDEAS FOR HAKARAS HA TOV

Recognize the good that you possess
 Appreciate what you do have rather than what you do not have
 Acknowledge that what you possess is a gift, not something you deserve
 Develop the habit of saying thank you for everything you receive, both big and small
 Realize that everything comes from Hashem and is for your good, then thank Him
 Always see the glass as being half full and be thankful
 Focus on developing an attitude of gratitude
 Appreciate the good that a family member does for you and say thank you
 Appreciate the good that a friend does for you and say thank you
 Appreciate the good that a colleague does for you and say thank you
 Appreciate the good that strangers do for you and say thank you

Write a thank you note to express your appreciation
 Make a telephone call to express your appreciation
 Give a gift to express your appreciation
 Express appreciation for routine actions such as taking out the garbage, preparing supper, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, bringing in the newspaper
 Thank the school bus driver
 Thank your teacher, thank your child's teacher
 Thank the mail carrier for delivering the mail
 Say *Modeh Ani* each morning with great feeling
 Reflect on *Modim Anachnu Lach* in *Shmoneh Esrei*
 Thank Hashem for every breath that you take



ACTT Daily Activity Log – *Shmiras HaLashon* 2 Module

Abbreviations: 1) CCDC = Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion by Michael Rothschild with Rabbi Shimon Finkelman; 2) SL = *Shmiras HaLashon*; 3) AC = *Ahavas Chesed*;
 4) JF = *Judging Favorably*; 5) KDD = *Kavanah During Davening*; 6) AM = *Anger Management*; 7) HT = *Hakaras HaTov*

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
EXAMPLE DAILY ENTRY – current module’s activity/action and up to 2 maintenance activities/actions					
Day	m/d/07	√	CCDC	x	√ SL: Paused to think about what to say and how to say it before speaking; and/or AC: Helped someone find a job;
					√ and/or JF: Did not jump to conclusions; and/or KDD: Meditated for 5 minutes before davening;
					√ and/or AM: Took a brisk walk to release anger; and/or HT: Appreciated a friend’s thoughtfulness and said thank you
Note: This is a continuation of the <i>Shmiras HaLashon</i> module and starts with Day 36 of the <u>Chofetz Chaim: A Daily Companion</u> text					
Sun	01/06/08		CCDC	36	
Mon	01/07/08		CCDC	37	
Tue	01/08/08		CCDC	38	
Wed	01/09/08		CCDC	39	
Thu	01/10/08		CCDC	40	
Fri	01/11/08		CCDC	41	
Sat	01/12/08		CCDC	42	
Sun	01/13/08		CCDC	42	



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Mon	01/14/08	CCDC	43		
Tue	01/15/08	CCDC	44		
Wed	01/16/08	CCDC	45		
Thu	01/17/08	CCDC	46		
Fri	01/18/08	CCDC	47		
Sat	01/19/08	CCDC	48		
Sun	01/20/08	CCDC	49		
Mon	01/21/08	CCDC	50		
Tue	01/22/08	CCDC	51		
Wed	01/23/08	CCDC	52		
Thu	01/24/08	CCDC	53		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Fri	01/25/08	CCDC	54		
Sat	01/26/08	CCDC	55		
Sun	01/27/08	CCDC	56		
Mon	01/28/08	CCDC	57		
Tue	01/29/08	CCDC	58		
Wed	01/30/08	CCDC	59		
Thu	01/31/08	CCDC	60		
Fri	02/01/08	CCDC	61		
Sat	02/02/08	CCDC	62		
Sun	02/03/08	CCDC	63		
Mon	02/04/08	CCDC	64		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon 2* Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Tue	02/05/08	CCDC	65		
Wed	02/06/08	CCDC	66		
Thu	02/07/08	CCDC	67		
Fri	02/08/08	CCDC	68		
Sat	02/09/08	CCDC	69		
Sun	02/10/08	CCDC	70		
Mon	02/11/08	CCDC	71		
Tue	02/12/08	CCDC	72		
Wed	02/13/08	CCDC	73		
Thu	02/14/08	CCDC	74		
Fri	02/15/08	CCDC	75		



ACTT Daily Activity Log (continued) – *Shmiras HaLashon* 2 Module

		Learned (√)		Activity/Action	
Date	√	Book	Day	√	Notes (description of activity/action, comments, etc.)
Sat	02/16/08	CCDC	76		
Sun	02/17/08	CCDC	77		
Mon	02/18/08	CCDC	78		
Tue	02/19/08	CCDC	79		
Wed	02/20/08	CCDC	80		
Thu	02/21/08	CCDC	81		
Fri	02/22/08	CCDC	82		
Sat	02/23/08	CCDC	83		
Sun	02/24/08	CCDC	84		
Mon	02/25/08	CCDC	85		
Tue	02/26/08	CCDC	86		

Glossary

Ahavas Chesed	.....loving kindness
B'li Neder	.....without making a formal commitment
Bitachon	.....trust in Hashem
Chesed	.....kindness
Chizuk	.....moral support
Davening	.....praying
Hakaras HaTov	.....gratitude
Kavanah	.....concentration
Klal Yisrael	.....the Jewish people
Lashon Hara	.....evil tongue (speech) - any derogatory or damaging (physically, financially, socially, or stress-inducing) communication
Midah, Midos	.....character trait, character traits
Mitzvah	.....a commandment
Mussar	.....ethical teaching
Neshamah	.....soul
Nisayon	.....a test
Ona'as Devarim	.....causing hurt through the spoken word
Parnasa	.....livelihood
Rechilus	.....gossip-mongering - any communication that generates animosity between people
Refuah Shleimah	.....a complete recovery from an illness
Sefer	.....a book
Shidduch	.....a match of two eligible and marriageable Jewish singles
Shiurim	.....classes
Shmiras HaLashon	.....guarding one's tongue
Siddur	.....prayer book
Siyata D'Shmaya	.....Divine Assistance
Talmid, Talmidim	.....student, students
Tefillah, Tefillos	.....prayer, prayers
Teshuva	.....repentance
Zechus	.....merit