

# Mitzvah Pizza

## Discussion, Activity and Classroom Guide



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### Activities for Writing and Discussion

- 1) People often give us clues about how they are feeling. This can happen through their facial expressions, their body language, their tone of voice, and the words they choose.
  - a. Looking carefully at all the character's faces, how do you think Missy is feeling when she's in her bedroom getting ready for her Daddy date? How is she feeling when she's remembering the cinnamon candy that burned her tongue? How is she feeling when she first meets Jane? How is she feeling when she first learns about how sticky notes are used to pay for pizza? How is she feeling at the park when she plays with Jane? How is she feeling when she decides how to spend her money? How is

she feeling when she gives her dad a hug at the end? And how is she feeling during her party?

- b. Now take a moment, and look back through the book at other character's faces and body language. How do you think Jane is feeling at different places in the book? How is Daddy feeling? What about background characters at the park or in the pizza shop? How are they feeling and what do you think is making them feel that way?

c. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**

Helping your child identify the feeling states of characters in books is beneficial in many ways. This can help build awareness of various feeling states in themselves and others. It's a way to practice empathy and perspective taking. These are crucial life and social skills.

d. **Extension Activities:**

Practice identifying feeling states in other situations.

- i. Play "Feelings Charades" (in which each person acts out a feeling and the others guess.) Help your child think through and analyze experiences after they occur. (Okay, you had an argument with your sibling. Now that you're both feeling better, take a moment and think about how the other person was feeling. How could you tell he/she was feeling that way? What do you think he/she was trying to communicate?)
- ii. If you'd like to build your child's vocabulary for feeling-related states, there are many feeling charts and images online that you can utilize to make "feeling cards". Modify this based on your child's age/developmental level. Below is some basic feeling vocabulary. Your child can create his or her own feeling chart by drawing images of each emotion next to the feeling.

Happy	Frustrated	Satisfied	Tired
Sad	Silly	Calm	Hurt
Worried	Lonely	Annoyed	Shy
Angry	Jealous	Confused	Surprised
Bored	Embarrassed	Excited	Friendly
Energetic	Proud	Disappointed	Stressed

- 2) Missy is saving her money. She's made some disappointing purchases in the past, and now she's trying to decide how to spend her money this time.

- a. Have you ever saved your own money? Was it hard to save? Or easy?
- b. Have you ever bought something that wound up being a disappointment? If so, how did you help yourself feel better?

c. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**

Discussing disappointments and how your child helped him or herself “feel better” can be the building blocks for coping skills. It’s crucial to model and foster healthy coping skills from an early age. There will be disappointments and there will be things that make your child sad or angry or worried. We cannot (and should not) protect them entirely from such emotional states. Learning how to manage these states and cope with them in a healthy way is beneficial.

d. **Extension activity:**

Create a healthy “Coping Skills” Card or Coping List that your child can keep in a safe place. Your child can draw images of healthy coping, or you can find images online to cut out and glue onto a card or into a book. If your child can write, he can write these coping skills. Once this is completed, help your child find a safe place to keep this. The next time your child is feeling upset, you can remind him/her to look at her coping card. This will help him/her practice using these crucial skills. Below are examples of healthy coping skills.

Talk to someone you trust	Listen to music	Breathe deeply	Take a walk with a grownup
Exercise	Read a book	Write in a journal	Draw in a journal
Take some time for yourself	Find a healthy distraction	Center yourself and notice your senses. What do you see, hear, feel, smell and taste?	Practice Yoga
Hug a stuffed animal	Sing a song	Play outside	Blow bubbles

. . . and many, many more!

- 3) At the Pizza Corner, some people pay with money and some pay with sticky notes.
  - a. What do you think of this idea?
  - b. Why do you think that Jane and her dad pay with sticky notes?

- c. Take a look at all the messages on the sticky notes. What do you notice about them?
  - d. What does the word “Mitzvah” mean?
  - e. Share about a time when you did a “mitzvah”?
  - f. What other mitzvahs would you like to do?
  - g. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**  
A mitzvah is a “good deed.” Many children naturally behave in kind and compassionate ways. Point this out to them when you see it happen, and let them know the value of this kindness. Help your child identify ways they can give back to their community.
  - h. **Extension Activity:**  
Brainstorm a list of ways to “give back”. Help your child select one that is realistic. Help him/her accomplish this goal and then talk about how it felt to “give” to someone else.
- 4) The customers at the Pizza Corner write kind notes on their sticky notes.
- a. How do you think the customers felt when they wrote these notes?
  - b. How do you think the kind messages made the customers feel when they used them to pay for their pizza?
  - c. How do you feel when you look at all those kind notes?
  - d. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**  
It’s helpful for children to practice identifying affirmations and giving them to other people. Help them identify how it feels to say (or write) something nice to someone else. How does it feel to receive an affirmation? The skill of affirming others can help them in all relationships. (Please note that it’s important for affirmations to be authentic, so help your child identify affirmations that they genuinely feel are true.)
  - e. **Extension Activity:**  
Have your child write or draw affirmations for someone else. Your child can then give the affirmation to that person. Sticky notes can be placed on the refrigerator or the bathroom mirror. Have your child practice verbal affirmations as well.
- 5) Mitzvah Pizza was inspired by a real pizza place in Philadelphia.
- a. How did you feel when you realized there is a real pizza place that offers pay-it-forward pizza?
  - b. Would you like to go there?

- c. We can be inspired when we see other inspiring people. What inspires you?
  - d. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**  
The experience of “gratitude” and inspiration is enlivening. Model this for your child and help them notice what inspires them and what they are grateful for. Humans create the lens/worldview through which they interpret their own experiences. These mindsets start young. Help cultivate healthy perspective by “noticing” and discussing the world around you through a lens of inspiration, empathy, and gratitude. If you are interested in learning more about the pizza place that inspired this book, I have a link to a video clip about Rosa’s Fresh Pizza (from the “Ellen Show”) on my website. [www.sarahlynnbooks.com](http://www.sarahlynnbooks.com)
  - e. **Extension Activity:**  
Think about someone, someplace or something that inspires you. Use this for creative inspiration. You can write a story or a poem about it. You can draw a picture about it. You can make up a song or a dance inspired by it. You can write this person/place/thing a “thank you” note. You can take a photo of this inspiration and share it with others.
- 6) Missy realizes that even though she and Jane like different kinds of pizza and pay in different ways, they’re not so different.
- a. Think about your own friends. How are you alike? How are you different?
  - b. Think about the members of your family. How are you alike and how are you different?
  - c. What qualities do you like in a friend?
  - d. What qualities do you not like in a friend?
  - e. What kind of friend are you (to others)?
  - f. Do you exhibit the positive qualities that you like in your own friends?
  - g. **Note to Parents/Teachers/Librarians:**  
Peer choice, communication skills, and the ability to tolerate and resolve conflicts are all crucial components of your child’s social world. Help your child think about the qualities they prefer in friends. Help them think through and work through peer conflict. Foster empathy when they think about their friends. Start these discussions when your child is young.
  - h. **Extension Activity**

