



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Lesson 1 – Introductory Hashkafah	page 4
<i>Reinforces how powerful words are and how much influence lies in the hands of one who gives information for shidduchim</i>	
Lesson 2 – Asking for Information	page 14
<i>Details the halachos involved in asking for information for a shidduch, and provides tips on how to successfully get true information</i>	
Lesson 3 – Three Categories of Information	page 30
<i>Delineates the level of severity of negative information. Included is how to assess which category any negative information would fall under, and how to deal with negative information within each category</i>	
Lesson 4 – Five Rules of Toeles	page 43
<i>Lists and explains the five conditions that must be met when it is necessary to relay negative information</i>	
Lesson 5 – Sounding Positive, Enthusiastic and Convincing	page 54
<i>Gives quick tips to guide the student through a typical phone call in which she is being asked for information</i>	
Lesson 6 – Review	page 69
<i>Reviews lessons 2-5 and concludes with a practical positive-labeling activity</i>	

שלוש קטגוריות



LESSON 3

3 Categories of Information

The three categories delineate the level of severity of negative information. Included is how to assess which category any negative information would fall under, and how to deal with negative information within each category

May today's learning be a z'chus for our parents and our children.
Dedicated by Meir Yoel and Susan Laub

Dedicated as a z'chus for older singles to find their zivug



Lesson Objective:

- Students will classify all shidduch information into three categories.
- Students will identify the correct course of action for each category.

Resources:

- Teacher's Guide (pgs 32-36)
- Starting Activity Cards (pgs 37-38)
- Worksheet and Teacher's Answer Sheet (pgs 39-40)
- Student Outline and teacher's Answer Sheet (pgs 41-42)

Lesson Synopsis:

1. Starting Activity: (3 minutes)

Teacher hangs up cards on board, arranging them in three columns, according to the category they fall under. In pairs, the girls must figure out the difference between each category.

2. Main Ideas: (30 minutes)

Part A: Teacher should hand out the student outline, and tell girls to take notes as she goes along. Using the Teacher's Guide, Teacher will go through each category, with the accompanying examples/stories.

Part B: Worksheet – Chart with shidduch questions/descriptions. Girls should check off which category each question/description falls into. This can be done in pairs.

3. Student Assessment: (3 minutes)

Select girls at random to read their answers on the outline.



Lesson Starter:

This lesson focuses on what to do when you know something negative about the person you're asked about. Are you supposed to offer the information without being asked? Are you supposed to lie or avoid the question if you are asked?

Remember – there are no limitations when it comes to giving positive information, as long as it's accurate. This lesson deals only with the disclosure of negative information.

Before learning the actual halachos, bear in mind the two 'A's:

1. **Ask** – Before revealing anything negative, it is crucial to ask a rav whether doing so is warranted. Therefore, if you are likely to be asked about someone, it is advisable to consult a rav in advance so that you will know what to say when approached.
2. **Assess** – Assess whether the negative information is severe enough to warrant mentioning.

Remember: What you consider a problem may not be so serious to the person asking you, while what you deem negligible may matter greatly to that individual.

→ Starting Activity: Hang cards (pgs 37-38) on board in three columns according to the category written on the card. Ask girls to read the cards and figure out why they were divided up in that way, i.e. what the title for each category should be.

After hearing their suggestions, write the correct title above each column:

- **Category One: Major Flaw**—A flaw that could seriously harm the marriage/relationship
- **Category Two: Moderate Flaw**—A flaw that a spouse would usually adjust to but is still a legitimate concern.
- **Category Three: Matter of Preference**—When someone would prefer that their spouse have a certain attribute, but its absence—or its opposite—has no intrinsic bearing on the success of a marriage.



Halachos:

- Hand out Student Outline (pg. 41)

CATEGORY ONE: MAJOR FLAWS

Note: Remind the girls about what was discussed in Lesson 1. Saying negative information could kill a shidduch, while withholding important information could ruin the lives of the two parties involved, and therefore relaying it may actually be required by halachah. If a girl thinks that certain information might need to be conveyed, she should make sure to involve a responsible adult.

A) Definition:

A major flaw is one that is seriously detrimental to establishing a viable Jewish home and family, a happy marriage, or a wholesome relationship. It would include any serious medical, emotional, Yiddishkeit or family problem. According to HaRav Shmuel Kamenetsky, *shlita*, among others, this includes anything that would prevent a person from properly fulfilling the functions of a spouse or parent.

These can be summarized in three M's and an F.

- **Medical** – any serious physical or emotional health issue, as well as a physical defect that can't be tolerated.

(Teacher's note: This may be a sensitive topic for some girls, and much caution should be taken not to give specific examples or make this sound harsh. Simply stress that medical issues warrant a shailah, but can often fall into category two or three.)

- **Middos** – seriously flawed character traits or *hashkafos*, which could ruin a marriage or undermine the integrity of a Jewish home.

- **Mode of behavior** – a lack of *tznius* or any immodest behavior that falls way below acceptable standards of morality.

(Teacher's note: This could be deliberately kept vague. Teachers should use their discretion as to what, if any, particulars to discuss.)

- **Serious Family Issues** – issues in the home that would adversely affect the ability of the young couple to have a successful marriage

(Example: parents are interfering in their childrens' married lives or force their children to do things that compromise *shalom bayis*)

**B) How to Deal with Category One Flaws:**

Sometimes, but not always, you are required to offer this information even without being asked. If confronted with any such issue, you should try to find out if the family plans to reveal the information themselves, and then ask a rav how to proceed. If the rav recommends disclosing the flaw to the other party, find an adult who will do so in a wise and sensitive manner.

(Note: Girls should clearly understand that if they know information in this category, it merely means that a *shailah* must be asked because the halachos are complex. Often, particularly with medical issues, it will not be necessary to do anything further.)

CATEGORY TWO: MODERATE FLAWS

A) Definition: This refers to moderate flaws that people usually adjust to in a marriage. Since no one has a perfect personality, everyone has to live with his or her spouse's moderate flaws. Nevertheless, any category two flaws could possibly be cause for legitimate concern.

Typical examples include family background, level of a boy's learning, age, *middos*, intelligence and personality. Personality traits that could fall into this category include disorganization, high strung/easily panics, laziness, etc. However, when such flaws are very extreme, they are often legitimate issues of serious concern for everybody, and thus belong in Category One.

B) How to Deal With Category Two Flaws: Negative information of this sort may not be offered, but if one is asked explicitly about such an issue, it is forbidden to lie. This does not mean that one should mindlessly provide every bit of negative information. It is often possible to avoid lying yet still frame things positively or at least significantly limit the negative impression being conveyed. How you proceed depends on whether or not the question being asked is regarding a concrete fact or a judgment call.

A concrete fact - When asked about a concrete fact of which you are aware, it is generally prohibited to lie and say that you don't know. In such a case, you have no choice but to answer honestly, even if you believe it is better left unsaid. However, you do not have to provide anything more than the precise information that was requested. Thus, for example, if you know that your friend's father spent time in prison, you may not claim ignorance if asked whether it is true. On the other hand, you do not have to elaborate, unless it is in response to additional specific questions. Nevertheless, if explaining further will lessen the negative impact, you should do so.

A judgment call - Many common questions are not so concrete. "Is he really serious about his learning?" "How much does she care about other people's needs?" Such questions are not so black-and-white, and answering them requires a measure of personal judgment. In addition, everyone's standards are different. Therefore, if you feel that your input would be counterproductive, you may say, "I don't know."

Of course, whether you're dealing with concrete facts or judgment calls, you should always try to



make sure that you phrase everything in a more positive way. Say “strong-minded” rather than “stubborn,” “easygoing/laid-back” rather than lazy, and “frugal” as opposed to “stingy.”

Note: It is important to recognize that the level of severity of any flaw often depends on the individual needs and preferences of the other party. If there is something he or she can't tolerate at all, for him or her it's a major flaw, even if others would not be bothered by it. Under such circumstances, it would have to be treated as a Category One issue and presented to a rav.

For example: Your neighbor asks you about a good friend of yours for their son. You know that your neighbors are neat, put-together people to whom organization is very important, and you heard from your brother that their son keeps his room meticulously neat and has a hard time handling messy roommates. Your friend, on the other hand, is extremely disorganized and messy by nature. If these contradictory tendencies are very deep-rooted, they could lead to serious conflict in a marriage. Therefore, you would have to ask a shailah whether this is considered a major flaw for the boy in question, and must therefore be disclosed.

CATEGORY THREE: MATTERS OF PREFERENCE

- → Activity: Ask the girls to raise their hands if they can't stand animals. Ask one of the girls who raised her hand if she feels that would affect the quality of her marriage. Explain that a real animal-lover might specifically only want to marry someone who can handle living with snakes. (Then, move on to explaining this third category.)

A) Definition: This refers to information that has no intrinsic bearing on the success of a marriage, but is a matter of concern to the individual who approached you.

Examples include questions like: “Is she musical?” “Is he very talkative?” “Is she a charismatic personality?” “Is he very health-conscious?”

- → Ask girls to give examples of questions they were asked or have heard about that they feel would make no difference to the quality of a marriage, but may be of concern to an individual.

B) How to Deal with Category Three Flaws: If you are asked explicitly about a specific point, you are permitted to answer truthfully, even if your response will include negative information. Sometimes, however, something that seems important to the person asking, and that could stop the shidduch, falls by the wayside once things begin moving. So, even when it is permitted to say the truth, think carefully. If this makes no difference to the marriage, but could mean the shidduch will be nixed, it is usually better to evade the question. Nevertheless, you may not lie outright, just as you may not with Category Two flaws.

Story: When Moishy Hammer was in shidduchim, he warned his mother not to even consider anybody with an accent. He hated the sound of anything but pure New York English. A British girl was suggested for him, and it sounded promising... except that her accent was British. As



British as you could get. Moishy, however, was kept in the dark about that, and the meeting was arranged. He came back that night glowing. Yes, he was interested in continuing. Huh, an accent? No, she totally had no accent. Nobody agreed with him about that, but it was a perfect shidduch and they enjoyed a happy marriage.

Moral of story: Had someone been asked outright whether the prospective girl had an accent, they would have been permitted to answer yes. However, since this is the kind of thing that may fall by the wayside once the couple meets, it would be best to evade answering the question.

NOTE: Although people often make peace with factors they viewed as unacceptable once there's a real person involved, it is not always safe to assume this will happen. If the question you decided to evade concerned an issue about which the inquirer feels very strongly, you should ask a rav whether to get back to that person and provide the requested information.

- → Quickly review of all three categories:
 - Category one: Major flaw that is likely to harm the marriage. Such information must be presented to a rav before being disclosed.
 - Category two: Important but not crucial information that is a legitimate concern for the person asking you. Such information must be given only if asked about (i.e., it may not be volunteered).
 - Category three: Of very slight consequence but matters to this individual. Usually better to evade the question if you can do so without lying.
- → Hand out worksheet (pg 39). Allow girls 3 minutes to fill it out in pairs. Go through correct answers.

Student Assessment:

- → Select girls at random to read their answers on the outline.

**She is
tone
deaf**

Starting Activity - Category 3

**Does she
seasonal
allergies?**

Starting Activity - Category 3

**Is she
athletic?**

Starting Activity - Category 3

**Does he say
a nice
dvar Torah?**

Starting Activity - Category 3

He smokes

Starting Activity - Category 2

**She is very
stubborn**

Starting Activity - Category 2

SAMPLE PAGES

**She is very
shy and
awkward in
public**

Starting Activity - Category 2

**He is only
5 feet tall**

Starting Activity - Category 2

**He doesn't
get along
with anyone**

Starting Activity - Category 1

**She is a
pathological
liar**

Starting Activity - Category 1

**She has
serious
medical
issues**

Starting Activity - Category 1

**His parents
and three
older siblings
are divorced**

Starting Activity - Category 1



NAME _____

3 CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION

Read each question/statement and decide into which category it belongs. Then, check off the appropriate box.

		Major Flaw	Moderate Flaw	Matter of Preference
1	Does he speak well in public?			
2	She's thirty-two years old. (The boy being suggested is twenty-nine.)			
3	A few of her siblings are not on speaking terms with her parents.			
4	Is she a good writer?			
5	Is she personable?			
6	Would she make a good homemaker?			
7	He is scared of heights.			
8	He has a very controlling personality and can be abusive.			
9	Was she valedictorian?			
10	Is she a happy person?			
11	Does he come from a nice and respectable family?			
12	Her family just lost their money.			
13	Does she dance?			
14	Is she pretty and put-together?			
15	He has a severe medical issue.			
16	Is she a healthy eater? Does she eat five servings of fruit and vegetables daily?			
17	Is she smart?			



3 CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION

Read each question/statement and decide into which category it belongs. Then, check off the appropriate box.

		Major Flaw	Moderate Flaw	Matter of Preference
1	Does he speak well in public?			✓
2	She's thirty-two years old. (The boy being suggested is twenty-nine.)		✓	
3	All siblings not on speaking terms with parents	✓		
4	Is she a good writer?			✓
5	Is she personable?		✓	
6	Would she make a good homemaker?		✓	
7	He is scared of heights.			✓
8	He has a very controlling personality and can be abusive.	✓		
9	Was she valedictorian?			✓
10	Is she a happy person?		✓	
11	Does he come from a nice and respectable family?		✓	
12	Her family just lost their money.		✓	
13	Does she dance?			✓
14	Is she pretty and put-together?		✓	
15	He has a severe medical issue.	✓		
16	Is she a healthy eater? Does she eat five servings of fruit and vegetables daily?			✓
17	Is she smart?		✓	



NAME _____

3 CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION

Fill in the blanks:

Positive vs. Negative: _____ information can always be shared. One must only be careful and know these halachos for _____ information.

All negative information will fall into one of three categories.

1. Category One: _____

Definition: _____.

- M _____
- M _____
- M _____
- F _____

→ **How to treat such information:** Ask a rav whether you need to _____ the information without being asked about it.

2. Category Two: _____

Definition: _____.

e.g. (fill in examples) _____, _____, _____, etc.

→ **How to treat such information:** Should not _____ the information, but if directly asked, may not _____.

3. Category Three: _____

Definition: _____.

→ **How to treat such information:** Better to _____ but may not _____.



3 CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION

Fill in the blanks:

Positive vs. Negative: Positive information can always be shared. One must only be careful and know these halachos for negative information.

All information will fall into one of three categories.

1. Category One: Major Flaw

Definition: Faults that are seriously harmful to successful relationship/marriage:

- M edical
- M iddos
- M ode of behavior
- F amily issues (serious)

→ **How to treat such information:** Ask a rav whether you need to volunteer the information without being asked about it.

2. Category Two: Minor Flaw

Definition: Information that is a legitimate concern for most people

e.g. (fill in examples) age, level of learning, middos, intelligence, etc.

→ **How to treat such information:** Should not volunteer the information, but if directly asked, may not lie.

3. Category Three: Matter of preference to this individual

Definition: Has no bearing on the marriage, but matters to this individual.

→ **How to treat such information:** Better to evade the question but may not lie.